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# The Works of Balzac

*CENTENARY EDITION*

VOLUME XIII.

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LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ

THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS

Scenes from Parisian Life

# LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

OF

# HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

*LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ*
*THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS*

Illustrated by

GEORGES CAIN

AND

EDWARD PICARD

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To His Highness Prince Alfonso Seraphino di Porcia.

Let me place your name at the head of a work which is essentially Parisian, although I thought it out while staying with you lately. What can be more natural than to offer you the flowers of rhetoric which budded in your garden, watered with regrets which taught me the meaning of nostalgia, but which you softened as we wandered about the *boschetti* beneath those elms that recalled to me the Champs Élysées? Perhaps I shall thus atone for the crime of thinking of Paris beneath the shadow of the Duomo, and of our muddy streets on the clean and elegant pavements of the Porta Renza. When I have certain books to publish which I hope to dedicate to Milanese friends, I shall have the pleasure of selecting names already dear to your old Italian romancers among those friends whom I love, and to whose remembrance I beg you to recall

Your sincerely affectionate

DE BALZAC.

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Designed by EDWARD PICARD.

## NOTE.

This volume is abridged by the omission of episodes, except so far as they are necessary to the main story.

K. P. W.

# LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ.

## I.

### THE MASKED BALL.

During the last Opera-ball of 1824, many masks were attracted by the beauty of a young man who was walking through the corridors and about the *foyer* with the air of a person in quest of a woman whom unforeseen circumstances had kept at home. The secret of this gait and manner, partly lagging, partly hurried, is known only to old women and loungers *emeriti*. In that immense rendezvous, the crowd takes little note of the crowd; interests are so intense that idleness itself is preoccupied.

The young dandy was so absorbed in his restless search that he did not notice his own success; at any rate he paid no attention to the soft words, the admiring surprise, the spicy jests, the lively exclamations of certain masks. Though his beauty classed him among those exceptional persons who come to the masked balls of the Opera in search of adventure, and who seem to await it as they awaited a lucky throw at roulette when Frascati was alive, he seemed, one might think, almost vulgarly sure of his evening. Perhaps he was the hero of one of those mysteries with three

personages which compose, in truth, the whole of a masked ball, though known only to those who play their part in each. As for the young women who go to these balls merely to say, "I have seen them," for provincials, for inexperienced youths, for foreigners, the Opera House on such nights must be a palace of weariness and *ennui*. To them this black crowd, slow yet hurried, going, coming, winding, turning, moving upward and again descending, which can be likened only to ants about their hill, is no more comprehensible than the Bourse to a Breton peasant who never heard of the Grand Livre.

With rare exceptions men in Paris never mask themselves; a man in domino is thought ridiculous. In this the instinct of the nation is shown. Men who wish to hide their happiness can go to the ball without coming there, and masks who are absolutely obliged to enter leave it as soon as possible. The masked men are jealous husbands who have come to spy upon their wives, or husbands engaged in some love affair who do not choose that their wives shall spy upon them, — two situations equally open to ridicule.

The young man was followed, though he seemed not to know it, by a persistent mask, short and stout, rolling himself along like a cask. To all *habitués* of an Opera-ball this domino was a civil functionary, a broker, a banker, a notary, in short a bourgeois of some kind, suspecting an infidelity. In the highest society no one ever goes in search of humiliating testimony. Several masks had already pointed out to one another with a laugh this enormous person; others had apostrophized him; certain young men had

twitted him; but the carriage of his shoulders and his cool bearing showed a marked disdain for such random shots. He went where the young man led him, as the hunted wild-boar goes, indifferent to the balls that whistle about his ears or the hounds that are yelping after him.

Although at the opening of a masked ball pleasure and anxiety wear the same livery — the illustrious black robe of Venice — and all seems mere confusion, the different circles of which Parisian society is composed soon meet, recognize, and observe one another. There are certain elementary signs so clear to initiates that these hieroglyphs of personal interests are as legible as an amusing novel. To a well-versed eye, therefore, this stout mask could not possibly be *en bonne fortune*, or he would infallibly have worn some prearranged sign, red, white, or green, significant of happiness previously agreed upon. Was he in quest of vengeance? After a while, seeing how closely the mask followed the man who was evidently bent on a love-affair, certain idlers began to take note of the beautiful face around which happiness had placed its divine halo.

The young man interested the mind; as he went and came he aroused curiosity. All things about him gave signs of a life of elegance. According to a fatal law of our epoch, there was little difference, either physical or moral, between the most distinguished and best-trained son of a duke and peer and this fascinating young man, whom poverty had lately gripped with her iron hands in the midst of Paris. Beauty and youth must have masked in him profound abysses,

as in other young men who seek to play a part in Paris without possessing the needful means, youths who risk all for all by sacrificing to the most courted god of the regal city, — Chance. Nevertheless, his dress and manners were irreproachable, and he trod the classic precincts of the *foyer* as though he knew them well. Who has not remarked that there, as in all other zones of Paris, a habit of behavior shows what you are, what you do, whence you come, and what you desire?

"Oh! what a handsome young man! We can turn round here and look at him," said a mask whom any *habitué* would have recognized as a well-bred woman.

"Don't you remember him?" replied the gentleman who accompanied her. "Madame du Châtelet once presented him to you."

"You don't mean that son of an apothecary she was in love with, who became a journalist, — the lover of Mademoiselle Coralie?"

"I thought him fallen too low ever to rise again; I don't understand how he has managed to re-appear in Parisian society," said Comte Sixte du Châtelet.

"He has the air of a prince," said the mask, "and that actress with whom he lived could never have given it to him. My cousin, who invented him, was never able to disinfect him wholly. I should like to know the mistress of this Sarginus. Tell me something of his life that I may go and mystify him."

The couple who then followed the young man, whispering in each other's ear, were instantly and particularly observed by the mask with the square shoulders.

"Dear Monsieur Chardon," said the prefect of the

Charente, taking the young dandy by the arm, "I present to you a lady who desires to renew her acquaintance with you."

"Dear Comte Châtelet," replied the young man, "this lady makes me feel how ridiculous was the name you give me. An ordinance of the king has restored to me the name of my maternal ancestors, the Rubemprés. Though the newspapers have announced the fact, it concerns so insignificant a personage that I do not blush to recall it to my friends, my enemies, and all indifferent persons. Class yourself as you please, but I am certain you will not disapprove of a measure to which your wife, when she was only Madame de Bargeton, advised me." (This neat retort, which made the lady smile, sent a nervous thrill through the prefect of the Charente.) "Please tell her," added Lucien, "that I now bear gules, a bull savage argent, in a field vert."

"Savage argent!" repeated Châtelet.

"Madame la marquise will explain to you, if you don't know it, why this ancient coat-of-arms is better than the chamberlain's key and the golden bees of the Empire which are in yours, to the great despair of Madame Châtelet, *née* Négrepelisse d'Espard," said Lucien, sharply.

"As you have recognized me I cannot mystify you now, but also I cannot express to you how you mystify me," said the Marquise d'Espard, in a low voice, amazed at the cool self-possession and insolence acquired by the man she had formerly despised.

"Permit me therefore, madame, to retain the only chance I have of occupying your thoughts by remain-

ing in that mysterious twilight," he replied, with the smile of a man who has no intention of compromising an assured happiness.

The marquise could not restrain a displeased gesture at finding herself, as they say in England, *cut* by Lucien's formality.

"I congratulate you on your change of condition," said the Comte du Châtelet.

"I receive your congratulations with the spirit in which you offer them," replied Lucien, bowing to the marquise with much grace.

"Conceited puppy!" said the count in a low voice to Madame d'Espard; "he has succeeded at last in acquiring ancestors."

"Conceit in young men, when practised upon us, is almost always the sign of some very high-placed happiness; in men of your age it means ill-fortune. I should like to know which woman of our world has taken this fine birdling under her protection; it might give me some chance of amusement to-night. My anonymous note is doubtless a bit of malice done by some rival, for it concerns this young man; his impertinence may have been dictated to him. Watch him. I 'll take the arm of the Duc de Navarreins, and you will know where to find me."

Just as Madame d'Espard was about to join her relation, the stout mask stepped between her and the duke and whispered in her ear: —

"Lucien loves you; he wrote that note. Your prefect is his greatest enemy; how then, could he explain himself before him?"

The unknown personage walked away, leaving

Madame d'Espard the victim of a twofold surprise. She knew of no one able to play the part assumed by the mask; she feared some trap, and went away by herself and sat down. Comte Sixte du Châtelet, whom Lucien had, as we have seen, deprived of his ambitious *du* with a malice which showed a predetermined vengeance, followed the handsome dandy at a distance, and presently met a young man to whom he thought he could safely unbosom himself.

"Well, Rastignac, have you seen Lucien? he has come to life again, with a new skin."

"If I were as handsome a fellow as he, I'd be still richer than he," replied the young man, in an airy tone, though shrewd and expressive of Attic sarcasm.

"No," said the voice of the stout mask in his ear, returning a hundred sarcasms for one in the mere manner with which he accented the monosyllable.

Rastignac, who was not a man to bear an insult, stood as if struck by lightning; then he suffered himself to be led to the recess of a window by an iron hand, which he felt he was unable to shake off.

"Young cock, hatched in Mother Vauquer's henyard, whose heart failed you in grasping the millions of old Taillefer when the worst of the work was done, let me tell you, for your personal safety, that if you don't behave towards Lucien as to a brother whom you love, you are in our hands while we are not in yours. Silence and obedience, or I'll enter your game and knock over your ninepins. Lucien de Rubempré is protected by the greatest power of the present day, the Church. Choose between life and death. Answer me!"

Rastignac's brain swam like that of a man sleeping in a forest who wakes to see a lioness beside him. He was afraid, and there were no witnesses; the most courageous men will yield to fear when that is the case.

"None but *he* could know — or dare," he muttered to himself.

The mask pressed his hand as if to prevent him from finishing his sentence.

"Act as if it were *he*," he said.

Rastignac then behaved like a millionnaire on a highway when a brigand points a pistol at his head; he capitulated.

"My dear count," he said to du Châtelet, to whom he returned, "if you value your position, treat Lucien de Rubempré as a man whom you will one day see in a much higher place than your own."

The mask made an almost imperceptible gesture of satisfaction, and started again on Lucien's traces.

"My dear fellow, you have rather rapidly changed your opinion about him," replied the prefect, naturally astonished.

"As rapidly as some of the Centre, who have voted with the Right," replied Rastignac to the prefect-deputy, whose vote had been lacking to the Ministry within a week or two.

"Are there such things as opinions in these days?" remarked des Lupeaulx, who was listening to them. "What are you discussing?"

"The Sieur de Rubempré, whom Rastignac wants me to believe is really a personage," said the deputy to the secretary-general.

"My dear count," replied des Lupeaulx, gravely,

Georges Cain

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Procédé Goupil

*Esther.*

"Monsieur de Rubempré is a young man of the highest merit; and so influentially protected that I should consider myself very fortunate in being able to renew my acquaintance with him."

"He is certain to tumble into the pitfall of the roués of the epoch," said Rastignac.

The speakers turned toward a corner where a number of the wits of the day, men more or less celebrated and some of them distinguished, were collected. These gentlemen were contributing their observations, their *bon mots*, and their malicious wit to the common fund, endeavoring to amuse themselves, or awaiting the advent of some amusement. In this group, which was oddly composed, were a number of men with whom Lucien had formerly had relations, made up of ostensibly good services and concealed evil ones.

"Well, Lucien, my boy, my dear fellow! so here we are, mended and done up as good as new. Where do we come from? Did we vault upon our new horse by means of the gifts that were sent from Florine's boudoir? Bravo, my boy!" said Blondet, releasing Finot's arm to take Lucien familiarly round the body and press him to his heart.

Andoche Finot was the proprietor of a review for which Lucien had once worked almost gratis; and which Blondet still enriched by the wisdom of his counsels, the depth of his views, and his occasional collaboration. Finot and Blondet personified Bertrand and Raton, — with this difference, that while La Fontaine's cat only ended by knowing itself duped, Blondet, knowing it all along, still served Finot. This brilliant free lance of the pen was, in truth, and for

a long time, a slave. Finot concealed a brutal will beneath a heavy exterior and a sluggish stupidity rubbed with intellect as a ship's biscuit is rubbed with garlic. He knew how to harvest what he gleaned of ideas and money in the broad field of the dissipated life led by men of letters and men in politics. Blondet, to his great misfortune, kept his intellect in the pay of his laziness and his vices. Constantly overtaken by want, he belonged to the poor clan of eminent men who can do much for the good of others, and nothing for their own, — Aladdins who allow their lamps to be borrowed from them. These admirable counsellors have keen and just minds when not dragged away by personal interests. With them it is the heart, and not the arm, which acts. Hence the inconsistencies of their moral sense, and the blame which inferior minds often cast upon them. Blondet would share his purse with the comrade he had wounded the night before; he would dine, drink, and sleep with another whom he stabbed with his pen the next day. His amusing paradoxes seemed to justify everything. Accepting the whole world as a jest, he did not choose to be taken seriously himself. Young, beloved, almost celebrated, and happy, he gave no thought, as Finot did, to acquiring the fortune necessary for middle life.

The most difficult courage of all is, perhaps, that which Lucien needed at this moment to cut Blondet as he had already cut Madame d'Espard and du Châtelet. Unhappily, in him the delights of vanity hindered the exercise of pride, which is certainly the active principle of many great things. His vanity had triumphed in the preceding encounter; he had shown

himself rich, disdainful, and happy to persons who had formerly disdained him when poor and miserable. But now, could a poet, like an aged diplomatist, rebuff to their faces two self-styled friends, who had helped him in his poverty, and with whom he had consorted in the dark days of his distress? Like a soldier who does not know when and where to use his courage, Lucien did what many another man in Paris has done; he compromised himself once more by accepting the shake of Finot's hand, and by not refusing Blondet's caress. Whoever has been or is concerned with journalism is under the cruel necessity of bowing to men whom he despises, of smiling upon his best enemy, of compromising with fetid vileness, and dirtying his fingers in the endeavor to pay his aggressors in their own coin. He gets habituated to seeing evil and letting it pass; he begins by condoning it, and finally commits it. In course of time the soul, constantly stained by shameful transactions, dwindles; that instrument of noble thought corrodes, its worn-out hinges turn of themselves. Alceste becomes Philinte, character is enervated, talents degenerate, and faith in noble works takes wing. He who began by taking pride in his own pages spends himself as he goes along in wretched articles which his conscience tells him, sooner or later, are so many wicked actions. He came, like Lousteau, like Vernou, intending to be a great and useful writer, he finds himself an impotent penny-a-liner. Consequently, we cannot too highly honor men who keep their character to the level of their talents, and who, like d'Arthèz, know how to walk with unfaltering step among the rocks and reefs of a literary life.

Lucien found nothing to say in reply to Blondet, whose easy wit always exercised upon him an irresistible fascination, the ascendency of a corrupter over his pupil. Blondet held, moreover, a good position in society, owing to his intimacy with the Comtesse de Montcornet.

"Have you inherited from an uncle?" asked General de Montcornet, jesting.

"Like you, I hold folly at arm's length," replied Lucien in the same tone.

"Has monsieur set up a review, or some sort of journal?" asked Andoche Finot, with the blustering impertinence of a man who lives on the brains of others.

"Better than that," replied Lucien, whose vanity, stung by the superiority assumed by the editor-in-chief, brought him suddenly back to a sense of his new position.

"What is it, my dear fellow?"

"I have a Cause."

"Cause, Lucien?" said Vernou, smiling.

"Ah! Finot, you are distanced by this fellow; I always predicted it. Lucien has talent; you did n't make the most of it; you let him go to the dogs. Repent, you fat blockhead!" cried Blondet.

Penetrating as musk, Blondet saw more than one secret in Lucien's tone and gesture and manner; while soothing him, however, he tightened by his words the curb-chain of the bit. He resolved to know the secret of Lucien's return to Paris, his projects, and his means of existence.

"Down on your knees before a superiority you can

never attain, though you *are* Finot," he continued. "Admit him instantly to the membership of strong men to whom the future belongs; he's one of us! Witty and handsome, is he not bound to succeed by your *quibuscumque viis?* Behold him here in his strong Milan armor, his doughty dagger half drawn, his banner flying! *Tudieu!* Lucien, where did you steal that pretty waistcoat? Nothing but love can find such stuffs as that. Have we a home? Just now I'm anxious to know the addresses of my friends, for I have n't where to lay my head. Finot turned me out to-night on the vulgar pretext of a love affair."

"My dear fellow," replied Lucien, "I've put in practice a maxim which is sure to lead to a tranqnil life: *Fuge, late, tace!* I leave you."

"But I don't leave you until you pay me a sacred debt, — that little supper, hein?" said Blondet, who was rather given to good eating and got himself invited by his friends when money lacked.

"What supper?" asked Lucien, with a gesture of impatience.

"You don't remember? By that I recognize the prosperity of a friend, — he loses his memory."

"He knows what he owes us; I'll guarantee his heart," cried Finot, catching up Blondet's joke.

"Rastignac," said Blondet, taking that young man by the arm as soon as he reached the upper end of the *foyer* near the column around which these so-called friends were grouped, "we are talking of a supper; will you come? — unless monsieur here," he added, very seriously, motioning to Lucien, "persists in denying a debt of honor. He may possibly do so."

"Monsieur de Rubempré is incapable of that," said Rastignac, who was thinking of far other matters.

"Here 's Bixiou!" cried Blondet, "he 'll come; nothing is complete without him. Unless he 's at hand, champagne only thickens my tongue; everything is flat, even the spice of epigrams."

"My friends," said Bixiou, "I see you all collected round the marvel of the day. Our dear Lucien revives Ovid's metamorphoses. Just as the gods changed themselves into remarkable vegetables and other things to seduce women, he has changed his thistle Chardon into a nobleman to seduce, what? Charles X.! My little Lucien," he went on, catching him by the button of his coat, "a journalist who plays the great lord deserves a famous charivari. In their place," added the pitiless jester, pointing to Finot and Vernou, "I 'd cut you up in their paper; you 'd supply them with columns of jokes which would bring in thousands of francs."

"Bixiou," said Blondet, "amphitryons are sacred twenty-four hours previous and twelve hours subsequent to the feast, which this illustrious friend of ours is about to give us."

"Of course, of course," replied Bixiou, "besides, what can be more desirable than to save a great name from oblivion and endow an effete aristocracy with a man of talent? Lucien, you have the esteem of the Press, of which you once were the noblest ornament, and we 'll sustain you. Finot, short snapping items in your Paris-column! Blondet, long-winded, insinuating articles on the fourth page of your paper! Let us announce the publication of the finest book of

our time, 'The Archer of Charles IX.' and implore Dauriat to give us another edition of 'Daisies,' those divine sonnets of our French Petrarch. Let us bear aloft our friend on the buckler of stamped paper which makes and unmakes reputations!"

"If you wish for a supper," said Lucien to Blondet, to get rid of the troop which threatened to increase, "it seems to me you need n't employ hyperbole and parable with an old friend as if he were a ninny. To-morrow evening, at Lointier's," he added hastily, as he saw a masked woman approaching him and sprang forward to meet her.

"Oh! oh! oh!" exclaimed Bixiou, on three notes with a scoffing air, apparently recognizing the woman to whom Lucien had gone, "this needs investigating."

And he followed the graceful couple, passed in front and around them, examined them with a searching eye, and returned, to the great satisfaction of the envious group, who were all interested to find out how and why Lucien's luck had changed.

"Friends," said Bixiou, "we have known the Sieur de Rubempré's new love for a long time. She is no other than des Lupeaulx's former rat."

One of the social corruptions now forgotten, but in fashion at the beginning of this century, was the so-called "rat." A rat (the word is out of date) was a child of ten or twelve years of age, supernumerary of some theatre, more especially the Opera, who was being trained for vice and infamy. A rat was a sort of infernal page, a female *gamin*, whose lively tricks were usually forgiven. A rat took what she could get; she was therefore a dangerous animal and to

be distrusted, though she introduced an element of gayety into life behind the scenes, like that of Sganarelle, Scapin, and Frontin in the old comedies. But the rat was expensive; she produced neither honor, nor profit, nor pleasure, and the fashion passed so completely away that few persons knew this secret detail of fashionable life before the Restoration until the time when a few writers laid hold of the rat as a novel subject.

"What! is Lucien, after having Coralie killed under him, to ride away with our Torpille[1] too?" said Blondet.

Hearing that name, the mask with athletic shoulders made a movement which, though quickly repressed, was seen by Rastignac.

"That's not possible," replied Finot. "La Torpille has n't a brass farthing to give him; she borrowed, so Nathan told me, a thousand francs from Florine."

"Oh! messieurs," exclaimed Rastignac, endeavoring to defend Lucien against these odious imputations.

"Bah! cried Vernou, "is Coralie's former pensioner too straight-laced?"

"That thousand francs proves to me," said Bixiou, "that our friend Lucien is living with La Torpille."

"What an irreparable wrong done to the élite of literature, science, art, and politics!" said Blondet. "La Torpille is the only prostitute in these days who has the making of a courtesan. Education has never spoiled her; she can't read and write; but she

[1] Torpille, torpedo, — a fish which gives electric shocks when touched.

would always have understood us. We might have given to our epoch one of those magnificent Aspasian figures without which there has hitherto been no great century. See how the Dubarry suits the eighteenth; Ninon de l'Enclos the seventeenth; Marion de l'Orme the sixteenth; Impéria the fifteenth. To Flora belongs the Roman republic which she made her heir, and which paid its public debt with that inheritance. What would Horace be without Lydia, Tibullus without Delia, Catullus without Lesbia, Propertius without Cynthia, Demetrius without Lamia, who is his only glory in these days."

"Blondet talking of Demetrius in the *foyer* of the Opera seems to me rather too much *shop,*" whispered Bixiou to his neighbor.

"And without these queens what would the empire of the Cæsars have been?" continued Blondet. "Laïs and Rhodope are Greece and Egypt. All are the poesy of the centuries in which they lived. This poesy, which is lacking to Napoleon (for the widow of his Grand army is a barrack jest) is not lacking to the Republic, which had Madame Tallien. And now in France who is there to fill the vacant throne? All of us here present could have made a queen. I might have given an aunt to la Torpille (for her mother is too authentically dead on the field of dishonor), du Tillet could have provided the mansion, Lousteau a carriage, Rastignac servants, des Lupeaulx a cook, Finot hats" (Finot could not restrain a wince as he received this shaft full in the face), "and Vernou should have puffed her while Bixiou put wit in her mouth. The aristocracy would have flocked to amuse

itself with our Ninon, around whom we would have summoned artists of all descriptions under pain of condemnatory articles. Ninon the Second should have been magnificent in assumption, overwhelming in luxury. She should have had Opinions. Forbidden dramatic masterpieces should have been read at her house; written expressly for it. She should not have been a liberal, for a courtesan is essentially monarchical. Ah! what a loss, what a loss! she ought to have kindled a whole century, and she loves one poor, miserable young man! Lucien will break her like a hound!"

"None of the female potentates you mention ever came from the streets," said Finot, "but this little rat has rolled in the gutter."

"Yes, like the bulb of a lily in the muck," remarked Vernou, "where it blooms and increases in beauty. There lies her superiority. Must we not know all, to create the laughter and the joy that are derived from all?"

"He is right," said Lousteau, who until then had listened and observed without speaking. "La Torpille knows how to laugh and to create laughter. That science of great writers and great actors belongs to those who have fathomed all social depths! At eighteen years of age that girl has already known the utmost opulence, the lowest poverty, and men at every stage of life. She holds the magic wand that unchains the passions of men; she is the salt sung by Rabelais which, if flung upon Matter inspires and lifts it to the marvellous regions of Art; her robe sheds speechless magnificence; her fingers drop jewels as her lips

drop smiles; she gives to everything the spirit of the occasion; her jargon sparkles with wit; she possesses the secret of onomatopœia to every shade of sound; she —"

"You are losing five francs' worth of feuilleton," said Bixiou, interrupting Lousteau. "La Torpille is infinitely better than all that. You have all been more or less her lovers, but none of you can say she has ever been your mistress; she can have you at any moment, but you will never have her. You force your way to her and ask her to do you a service —"

"Oh, as for that," said Blondet, "she is more generous than a brigand chief in his lucky moments; and more devoted than the best of college comrades. You can trust her with your purse and your secrets. What made me elect her for the queen of this epoch is her Bourbon indifference to the fallen favorite."

"She is like her mother, much too expensive," said des Lupeaulx. "The former would have swallowed up the revenues of the archbishop of Toledo; she ran through two notaries —"

"And fed Maxime de Trailles when he was a page," put in Bixiou.

"La Torpille is expensive, like Raffaelle, like Carème, like Taglioni, like Lawrence, like Boule, just as all artists of genius are dear," said Blondet.

"But Esther never had that air and manner of a well-bred woman," said Rastignac, motioning to the masked woman who was leaning on Lucien's arm. "I will bet it is Madame de Sérizy."

"Not a doubt of it, exclaimed du Châtelet, "and that explains Monsieur de Rubempré's prosperity."

"Ah! what a pretty secretary to an embassy he will make!" sneered des Lupeaulx.

"And all the more because Lucien is a man of talent," said Rastignac. "These gentlemen have each had more than one proof of that," he added, looking at Blondet, Finot, and Lousteau.

"Yes, the lad's cut out to go far," said Lousteau, who was bursting with jealousy, "and he'll go the farther for having what we call *independence of ideas* —"

"You formed him," said Vernou.

"Well," resumed Bixiou, "I appeal to the recollections of des Lupeaulx; I'll bet a supper that masked woman is La Torpille."

"I take the bet," said du Châtelet, who was interested to know the truth.

"Come, des Lupeaulx," said Finot, "see if you recognize the ears of your rat."

"There's no need to commit a crime of *lèse-masque*," remarked Bixiou. "Esther and Lucien will pass us presently as they come up the *foyer*, and I'll engage to prove to you that that is she."

"So our old friend Lucien has come to the surface, has he?" said Nathan, who just then joined the group. "I thought he had returned to his native Angoulême for the rest of his days. Has he discovered some secret way of escape from duns?"

"He has done what you will not do in a hurry," said Rastignac; "he has paid his debts."

The stout mask nodded his head as if in assent.

"When a man reforms at his age, he often deforms himself," said Nathan. "His boldness and vigor are all gone; he becomes a capitalist."

"Well, this one will always be *grand seigneur*," replied Rastignac; "there will always be in him a certain height of ideas which will put him above many men who think themselves his superiors."

At this moment journalists, idlers, dandies, were all examining, as a jockey examines a horse, the charming object of their bet. These judges, grown old in the knowledge of Parisian depravity, all men of superior mind each in his different way, equally corrupt, equally corrupting, and given over to the service of unbridled ambitions, accustomed to suppose all, to divine all, — these men had their eyes fixed eagerly on the masked woman,— a woman who could not be deciphered by any but such as they. They and a few other *habitués* of the Opera could alone recognize under the shroud of a black domino, under the hood and the falling cape, which make all women look alike, the outline of the form, the peculiarities of carriage and gait, the movement of the figure, the poise of the head, — things the least perceptible to common eyes, but to theirs quite easy to perceive.

In spite of the shapeless garment, they were able to recognize the most moving of all sights, — that which presents itself to the eye when we see a woman animated by a real, true love. Whether it were La Torpille, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, or Madame de Sérizy, the lowest or the highest rung of the social ladder, this creature was an adorable creation, the flash of all happy dreams. These old young men, as well as certain young old ones, were conscious of so keen a sensation that they envied Lucien the sublime privilege of transforming that woman to a goddess.

She was there as though she were alone with Lucien; to her there were no ten thousand persons present, there was no heavy atmosphere thick with dust; she was isolated beneath the celestial vault of Love as Raffaelle's madonnas beneath their golden halos. She felt no pressure of the crowd; her eyes flamed through the fissures of her mask, and fixed themselves on Lucien; the quivering of her whole person seemed to respond to the movements of her beloved. Whence comes that flame which shines about a loving woman and singles her from every other? Whence that sylph-like buoyancy which seems to change the laws of weight? Is it the soul escaping? Can happiness possess some physical efficacy? The graces of childhood, of virgin innocence, were visible behind that domino. Though parted and walking, these two beings were like the groups of Flora and Zephyrus entwined, as we see them, by distinguished sculptors; but here was something more than sculpture, that grandest of arts. Lucien and his domino recalled those angels playing with birds and flowers, such as Gian-Bellini has painted beneath the portraits of the Virgin-Mother; Lucien and this woman belonged to Fantasy, which is higher than Art as cause is higher than effect.

When this woman, oblivious of all, came within a step of the watching group, Bixiou cried out, "Esther!" The unfortunate creature turned her head quickly, as persons do when they hear themselves called, recognized the malicious querist, and dropped her head on her breast, as the head of the dying falls when the last breath leaves it. A jarring laugh broke from the group of men, who dispersed into the crowd

like mice making for their holes. Rastignac alone remained, that he might not seem to fly before Lucien's flaming glance. He saw before him two sorrows, equally profound, though veiled, — that of the poor Torpille, struck down as by a thunderbolt; that of the strange, incomprehensible mask, the only remaining person of the late group. Esther said a word in Lucien's ear as her knees gave way under her, and Lucien, supporting her on his arm, disappeared with her. Rastignac followed the pair with his eye, standing lost in reflection.

"How did she get the name of Torpille?" said a sombre voice, which struck to his very vitals, for it was not disguised.

"It is *he*, indeed, — escaped again!" murmured Rastignac to himself.

"Silence! or I strangle you," said the mask, in another voice. "I am satisfied with you; you have kept your word, and more than one arm is now at your service. Henceforth be dumb as the grave; but, before being silent forever, answer my question."

"Well, the girl is so magnetic that she might have laid her benumbing spell on the Emperor Napoleon, as she will on some one more difficult to allure — you!" replied Rastignac, moving away.

"One moment," said the mask. "I wish to prove to you that you have never seen me."

The man unmasked. Rastignac hesitated a moment, seeing no sign of the repellent personage he had formerly known in the Maison Vauquer, then he said: —

"The devil has enabled you to change everything about you except your eyes, which can never be forgotten."

An iron hand compressed his arm as if to warn him to eternal silence.

At three in the morning des Lupeaulx and Finot found Rastignac leaning against a column at the place where the terrible mask had left him. He had confessed his soul to himself; he had been priest and penitent, judge and criminal. He allowed them to take him away to breakfast, and returned home completely drunk, but taciturn.

## II.

### LA TORPILLE.

THE rue de Langlade, like the adjacent streets, disfigures the Palais-Royal and the rue de Rivoli. This part of one of the most brilliant quarters of Paris retained for a long time the pollution left by the mounds of filth and rubbish of the old city on which there were formerly windmills. These narrow streets, dark and muddy, where various slovenly industries are carried on, present at night a mysterious physiognomy that is full of contrasts. Coming from the lighted regions of the rue Saint-Honoré, the rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and the rue de Richelieu, incessantly crowded and brilliant with the masterpieces of Industry, Fashion, and Art, any man to whom the Paris of the night-time is unknown would be seized with gloomy terror if he entered the network of little streets encircled by that light reflected on the skies. Black shadows succeed the glare of gas. At long distances a pale oil-lamp casts an uncertain smoky gleam, which does not reach into certain dark and dismal alleys. Those who pass through this region — and they are few — hurry on. The shops are mostly closed; the ones that are open are of bad character,— either dirty, ill-lighted wine-shops, or those of low milliners, where cologne is sold. Unwholesome chills lay their damp mantle on

your shoulders. Few carriages go by. Ominous angles meet the eye, among which can be distinguished that of the rue de Langlade, the opening to the passage Saint-Guillaume, and several other dark corners.

The municipal council has never succeeded in cleansing this great plague-spot, where prostitution has long established its headquarters. Perhaps it is as well for the Parisian world to leave to these narrow streets their loathsome aspect. Passing through them in the day-time no one would imagine what they are by night. Then they are lined with fantastic beings of no world but their own; white, half-naked figures lean against the walls; the shadows become animated. Between the walls and the passers along the street, glide costumes which talk and walk. Some half-open doors laugh loudly. Words which Rabelais declares to be frozen, and which are melting, fall upon the ear. Scraps of song rise between the paving-stones. The noise is not vague; it signifies something. When it is hoarse and strident it is a voice; but when it resembles a song there is nothing human in it; it is more like hissing; it is sibilant. The tapping of boot-heels has something, I know not what, provocative and mocking. This confused mass of things turns the brain. Atmospheric conditions are upset; one is hot in winter and cold in summer. But, whatever the weather be, this strange nature offers ever the same spectacle: the fantastic world of Hoffmann is there. The most matter-of-fact book-keeper would find nothing real after crossing the narrow defiles which lead from decent streets where there are passers and shops and lamps. More indifferent or

more shame-faced than the queens and kings of a past time, who did not fear to concern themselves with courtesans, present administrations or modern policy dare not face the question of this open sore of capitals. Certainly, measures must change with the times; and those which handle individuals and their liberty are delicate; but boldness and decision might be shown on purely material points, such as air, light, and condition of premises. The moralist, the artist, and the wise administrator will regret the demolition of Galeries de Bois of the Palais-Royal, where were penned those lambs who will always come where loungers congregate. What has been the result? To-day, the most brilliant parts of the boulevards, that enchanting promenade, are interdicted in the evening to families. The police have not profited by the resource offered in certain passages, to protect the public thoroughfares.

The girl crushed by the sound of her name at the masked ball had lived, for the last month or two, in a squalid-looking house in the rue de Langlade. Propped against the wall of an enormous edifice, this building, ill-plastered, shallow, and of prodigious height, is lighted from the street only, and resembles nothing so much as a parrot's perch. A couple of rooms are on each floor, and no more. They are reached by a slender stairway clinging to the wall and curiously lighted by sashes which show to those without the railing of the stairs, — each landing being indicated by a sink-drain, one of the most horrible peculiarities of Paris. The shop and the lower floor were occupied just then by a tin-smith; the owner of

the property lived on the floor above, and the remaining four stories were hired by decent grisettes who received a good deal of consideration and some concessions from the proprietor and the portress on account of the difficulty of letting a house so strangely built and situated. The uses to which this quarter was put is explained by the existence of several other houses built in the same way, which are not serviceable for business, and can only be profitably used for secret, precarious, and questionable purposes.

About three in the afternoon, the portress who had seen Mademoiselle Esther brought home in a fainting condition by a young man at two in the morning, took counsel with the grisette who lived on the floor above, and who, before driving off in a carriage on a pleasure excursion, had expressed her uneasiness to the portress about Esther, whom she had not heard stirring as usual all the morning. Esther was doubtless asleep, but the sleep seemed suspicious. Being alone in the lodge the portress was unable to go up and inquire what was happening on the fourth story, where Esther lodged. She began to feel anxious, and was just about to confide the care of the lodge (a sort of niche scooped in the wall of the lower floor) to the son of the tinsmith, when a hackney-coach stopped at the door. A man wrapped in a cloak from head to foot, with the evident intention of hiding his dress or his quality, got out, and asked for Mademoiselle Esther. The portress felt reassured at once; the silence and quietude were fully accounted for. As the visitor passed up the stairs above the lodge the portress noticed the silver buckles that were on his shoes, and she fancied she saw the

fringe of the belt of a cassock. She went down to the street and questioned the driver, who answered without words, but the portress understood him.

The priest knocked, received no answer, heard low sighs, and forced the door with his shoulder, with a strength given to him, no doubt, by charity, though in another man it might have been thought habit. He went hastily into the second room, and there saw, before a figure of the Virgin in colored plaster, poor Esther kneeling, or rather crouching down upon herself, with her hands clasped. She was dying.

A brasier of lighted charcoal told the story of that dreadful morning. The hood and mantle of her domino lay on the floor. The bed had not been occupied. The poor creature, struck to the heart by a mortal wound, had doubtless made her preparations on returning from the Opera. An end of candle-wick remaining in the cup of a candlestick showed how lost she had been in her last reflections. A handkerchief, wet with tears, attested the sincerity of the Magdalen's despair. This visible repentance brought a smile to the priest's face. Ignorant of how to destroy herself, Esther had left the inner door open, unaware that the air of the two rooms needed more charcoal to make it unbreathable; the fumes had merely stupefied her; the fresh air coming in from the staircase brought her back by degrees to the sense of her misery.

The priest stood still, lost in gloomy meditation, unaffected by the divine beauty of the girl, watching her first movements as if she had been some animal. His eyes roved from this crouching body to the

objects about the chamber with apparent indifference. He looked at the furniture of the room, the red-tiled floor of which was barely hidden by a threadbare carpet. A small painted wooden bedstead of an old pattern, hung with yellow cotton curtains fastened back with red rosettes; one armchair and two common chairs of the same painted wood and covered with the same cotton which also supplied the curtains for the windows; a gray paper dotted with flowers now blackened by time and grease; a mahogany work-table; a fireplace encumbered with cooking utensils of the commonest description; two bundles of firewood, one half used; a stone chimney-piece on which were pieces of glass-ware mixed with jewels, scissors, a dirty pin-cushion, white and perfumed gloves; a charming bonnet thrown on the water pitcher; a Ternaux shawl used to darken the window; an elegant dress hanging from a nail; a little sofa, hard, without cushions; shabby broken clogs, delicate little slippers and dainty, fit for a queen; common earthen-ware plates chipped and cracked, on which lay the remnants of the last meal, and forks and spoons of German silver (the plate of the poor of Paris), a basket of potatoes and a pile of soiled linen, above which hung the fresh, crisp cap of a grisette; a miserable wardrobe, open and empty, on the shelf of which lay a pile of pawn-tickets, — such was the strange collection of things lugubrious and things joyous, miserable and opulent, which met the eye. These vestiges of luxury in the midst of dilapidation; this home so suggestive of the Bohemianism of the girl lying there in her huddled clothing, like a horse lying dead in his harness under

broken shafts, — did this strange spectacle make the priest reflect? Did he say to himself that this misguided creature must be disinterested to couple such poverty with the love of a rich young man? Did he attribute the disorder of that room to the disorder of her life? Did he feel pity, or horror? Was his charity stirred? Whoso had seen him, with crossed arms and sombre brow, his lips contracted, his eye hard, would have thought him absorbed in feelings of hatred, in reflections that thwarted him, in projects of sinister import. He was, assuredly, insensible to the beauty of the rounded form of that crouching Venus as it showed beneath the black of her skirt. The drooping head, which, gave to view as she lay there the nape of the white, soft, flexible neck, the beautiful shoulders of a well developed physical nature, did not move him. He made no effort to raise her; he seemed not to hear the gasping breath which told of returning life; not until she gave one horrible sob and cast a terrified glance upon him did he deign to lift her and carry her to the bed, — with an ease which proved his enormous strength.

"Lucien!" she murmured.

"Love returns, the woman follows," said the priest to himself, with a sort of bitterness.

The victim of Parisian depravity now took notice of the dress of her liberator, and said, with the smile of a child that lays its hand on a coveted object, "I shall not die without Heaven's pardon."

"You can live to expiate your sins," said the priest, moistening her forehead with water, and making her smell a flask of vinegar he found on the chimney-piece.

"I feel that life, instead of leaving me, is flowing back," she said, expressing her gratitude for this care by charming natural gestures. This winning pantomime, which the Graces themselves might have used to allure, justified the popular name of this strange girl.

"Do you feel better?" asked the priest, giving her a glass of sugared water.

He seemed to know the ways of such abodes; he moved about as though the place were his. This privilege of feeling everywhere at home belongs only to kings, prostitutes, and robbers.

"When you have quite recovered," said the priest, after a pause, "you will confess to me the reasons which led you to commit this final crime of suicide."

"My history is very simple," she answered. "Three months ago I was living in the vice to which I was born. I was the worst of creatures, the most infamous; now I am only the most wretched. I cannot speak to you of my mother, who was murdered — "

"By a captain in a suspected house," said the priest, interrupting his penitent. "I know your origin; I am aware that if a person of your sex can ever be excused for leading a shameful life it is you, who have never known a good example."

"Alas!" she said, "I was never baptized or taught religion."

"All is not yet irreparable," replied the priest, "provided that your faith, your repentance, are sincere and without reservations."

"Lucien and God now fill my heart," she said, simply.

"You should have said 'God and Lucien,'" replied the priest, smiling. "You remind me of the object of my visit. Relate to me everything concerning that young man."

"Do you come from him?" she asked, with a loving expression which would have touched any other priest. "Oh! he suspected what I would do!"

"No," replied the priest, "it is not your death, it is your life about which we are concerned. Come, explain to me your relations."

The poor girl trembled at the rough tone of the ecclesiastic, but she trembled like a woman whom brutality could not surprise.

"Lucien is Lucien," she said, — "the handsomest young man and the best of living beings; but if you know him, my love must seem natural to you. I met him by chance three months ago, at the Porte-Saint-Martin, where I had gone on one of my days out; for we always had one day in the week at Madame Meynardie's, where I lived. The next day I left without permission. Love had entered my heart, and had so changed me that when I returned from the theatre I did not know myself; I felt a horror for myself. Never has Lucien known what I have been. Instead of telling him where I lived I gave him the address of these lodgings, which a friend gave up to me. I give you my sacred word —"

"Do not swear."

"Is it swearing to give my sacred word? Well, then, since that day I have worked in this room making shirts at twenty-eight sous apiece that I might live by honest work. For a month I ate nothing but

potatoes, to stay virtuous and worthy of Lucien, who loves me and respects me as the most innocent of the innocent. I have made my declaration in form to the police to recover my legal rights, and I have put myself under two years' surveillance. They who are so ready to inscribe us on the registers of infamy make every difficulty before they will scratch us off. All I prayed for was that Heaven would strengthen my resolution. I shall be nineteen in April; there 's hope at that age. It seems to me that I was only born three months ago. I prayed to God every morning, and begged him to grant that Lucien might never know my former life. I bought that Virgin you see there; I pray to her as best I can, for I don't know any prayers. I don't even know how to read or write; I have never entered a church, and I 've never seen the good God except in processions, out of curiosity."

"What do you say to the Virgin?"

"I speak to her as I do to Lucien, with outbursts from my soul that make him weep."

"Ah! he weeps?"

"With joy," she said, eagerly. "Poor darling! we understand each other so well that we have but one soul. He is so gentle, so caressing, so sweet of heart, of mind, of manners. He says he is a poet; but I say he is a god. Ah, forgive me! but you priests, you don't know what love is. There 's none but us who know men well enough to judge what Lucien is. A Lucien is as rare as a woman without sin; when we meet him we can do nothing else but love him — there! So I wanted to be worthy of being loved by my Lucien; there lies my misery. Last night, at the Opera, I was

recognized by some young men who have no more heart than a tiger has pity; I could manage a tiger. My veil of innocence fell from me; their laughs cut to my head and heart. Do not think that you have saved me; I shall die of grief."

"Your veil of innocence?" said the priest. "Then you have treated Lucien with the utmost rigor?"

"Oh, father, you who know him, how can you ask me that question? Who shall resist a god?"

"Do not blaspheme," said the ecclesiastic, in a gentler voice. "No man resembles God. Such exaggeration ill becomes a veritable love. You do not love your idol with a pure and true love. If you had really experienced the change you boast of, you would have acquired those virtues which are the attributes of youth and innocence; you would know the delights of chastity, the delicacies of female modesty, — those glories of a young girl. You do not love."

Esther made a gesture of terror, which the priest saw; but it did not shake the impassibility of a confessor.

"Yes, you love for yourself, and not for him, — for the temporal pleasures which charm you, not for love's sake in itself. If you take love so, you are devoid of that sacred tremor inspired by a being on whom God has laid the seal of adorable perfections. Have you reflected that you degrade Lucien by your past impurity; that you corrupt his youth by those appalling delights which have given you your name of infamy? You have been inconsistent with yourself in this passion of a day."

"Of a day!" she said, raising her eyes.

"By what name do you call a love which is not eternal; which can never unite us in the Christian's future with the one we love?"

"Ah, I want to be a Christian!" she cried, in a muffled, violent tone, which must have won for her the mercy of our Saviour.

"Is a girl who has never received the baptism of the Church, nor that of knowledge, who can neither read nor write nor pray, who cannot take one step without the very pavements rising up to accuse her,—a girl remarkable only for the fugitive privilege of a beauty which disease may take away from her to-morrow; is it this creature, disgraced, degraded, and who knows her degradation (ignorant and less loving you might have been more excusable), — is it this future prey of suicide and hell who is fit to be the wife of Lucien de Rubempré?"

Each sentence was the thrust of a dagger to the depths of her heart. At each sentence the swelling sobs, the flowing tears of the despairing creature proved the force with which light was entering into a mind as untutored as that of a savage; into a soul at last awakened; into a nature upon which depravity had spread a layer of muddy ice, now melting in the sun of truth.

"Why did I not die!" was the sole idea that she uttered from the midst of the torrent of ideas which streamed through her brain and ravaged it.

"Daughter," said the terrible judge, "there is a love which is never confessed before men, the aspirations of which are received by the angels with smiles of joy."

"What love?"

"Love without hope when it inspires the life, when it puts into life the principle of self-sacrifice, when it ennobles all acts by the desire of attaining to ideal perfection. Yes, the angels rejoice in that love, for it leads to a knowledge of God. To strive for perfection that you may be worthy of him you love; to make a thousand secret sacrifices for him; to adore him from afar; to give drop by drop your blood; to immolate to him your self-love; to have no pride or anger toward him; to spare him even the knowledge of the jealousy he rouses in the heart; to give him all he wishes, be it to our own detriment; to love what he loves; to have our face turned ever to him that we may follow him without his knowledge, — such love Heaven would have pardoned you; it offends neither divine nor human laws; it leads to other paths than your vile pleasures."

As she listened to this dreadful sentence (and in what tones was it uttered!) Esther was seized with a not unnatural mistrust. The words were like the thunder-clap that precedes a storm. She looked at the priest; her entrails were wrung by that awful grip which seizes the most courageous in face of sudden and imminent danger. No glance could read what was then passing in the soul of that man, but the boldest would have known there was more to fear than to hope in the aspect of his eyes, — formerly clear and yellow as those of tigers, but on which austerities or privations had thrown a mist like that we see on far horizons in the dog-days, when the earth is hot and luminous but so vaporous that it becomes almost invisible. Deep folds of the flesh, to which countless pits of the small-

pox gave an appearance of ragged ruts, ploughed up the sallow skin which seemed to have been baked by the sun. The harshness of this countenance came out the more because it was framed by the neglected wig of a priest who cares no longer for his person, — a dilapidated wig of a rusty black in the sunshine. His athletic chest, his hands like those of an old veteran, his powerful torso and strong shoulders resembled those of the caryatides which artists of the middle ages employed in certain Italian palaces, an imperfect reproduction of which may be seen in the façade of the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin.

The least clear-sighted person would have thought that hot passions or uncommon events had cast this man into the bosom of the Church. Certainly, some awful thunderbolt could alone have changed him — if indeed such a being is susceptible of change. Women who have led the life now so violently repudiated by Esther soon reach an absolute indifference to the external form of men. They are like the literary critic of the present day, who may, under certain aspects, be compared with them, for he reaches, after a while, a profound indifference to the formulas of art. He has read so many books; he sees so many come and go; he has so accustomed himself to written pages; he has endured so many plots, seen so many dramas, made so many articles without saying what he thought; betrayed so often the cause of art in favor of his friendships and his enmities, — that he reaches at last a stage of disgust for all things, though he goes on judging nevertheless. It needs a miracle to make that man produce real work, — just as a pure

and noble love can only dawn through a miracle in the heart of a courtesan.

The tone and manners of this priest, who seemed to have stepped out of a canvas of Zurburan, appeared so hostile to the poor girl, to whom outward appearance was of no consequence, that she fancied herself less the object of his solicitude than the necessary instrument of some plan. Without being able to mentally distinguish between the arguments of self-interest and the unction of charity (for we must be on the watch indeed to detect the false coin that is given by a friend), she instinctively felt herself in the talons of some monstrous and ferocious bird of prey, swooping down upon her after circling for a time in the air. In her terror, she said in a piteous voice: "I thought that priests were meant to comfort us, but you torture me."

At this cry of anguish the priest made a gesture and paused; he collected himself before replying. During that moment these two persons so singularly brought together examined each other furtively. The priest understood the woman, but the woman could not understand the priest. During that pause he must have renounced some plan which threatened poor Esther, and returned to his first intentions.

"We are physicians of the soul," he said in a gentle voice; "we know what remedies are needed for its ills."

"Much should be forgiven to misery," said Esther.

She thought she had been mistaken, and so thinking, she slid from her bed and knelt at the feet of that man, kissed his cassock in deep humility, and raised her eyes bathed in tears to his face.

"I thought I had done much," she said.

"Listen, my daughter; your fatal reputation has plunged Lucien's family into mourning. They fear, with some justice, that you will entice him to dissipation, to reckless follies —"

"True, true," she said; "it was I who took him to the ball last night —"

"You are beautiful enough to make him wish to exhibit you before the eyes of the world; he would take pride in showing you, as he would a fine riding-horse. If only his money were spent upon you, — but he will spend his time, his strength; he will become indifferent to the noble prospects preparing for him. Instead of being — as he can be some day — an ambassador, rich, admired, famous, he will become like so many other debauched men who have drowned their talents in the mud of Paris for the love of an impure woman. As for you, sooner or later, you would return to your former life, having risen for a moment only to a higher sphere, for you have not in you that inner strength given by education to resist vice and think of the future. You have no more really parted from your former companions than you have from those young men who shamed you at the Opera last night. Lucien's true friends, alarmed at the love you have inspired in him, have followed his steps and have learned all. Full of anxiety, they have sent me here to you to learn your intentions and decide your fate; for while they are powerful enough to remove this obstacle to the young man's career, they are also merciful. Know this, my daughter: a woman beloved by Lucien has claims to their respect; the true Christian wor-

ships the mire upon which by chance the divine light shines. I have come here as the agent of their benevolent thoughts. Had I found you wholly wicked, bold, crafty, corrupt to the marrow of your bones. and deaf to the voice of repentance, I should have abandoned you to their just anger. The liberation, civil and political, which you say you have found so difficult to obtain, — and which the police do right to withhold in the interests of Society itself, — the release, which I have just heard you long for with the earnestness of true repentance, is here," said the priest, drawing from his belt an official paper. "You applied only yesterday, and this paper is dated to-day. Judge from that how powerful are the persons who watch over Lucien's interests."

At sight of that paper the convulsive tremblings of an unexpected joy shook poor Esther, and overcame her so ingenuously that a fixed smile rested on her lips like that of idiocy. The priest paused, looked attentively at the girl to see if, when deprived of the horrible strength which such corrupted creatures gain from their corruption itself, and returned to her frail and delicate primitive nature, she could bear the strain of so many impressions. As a courtesan Esther could have played the comedy; but restored to innocence and truth she might die of it, — just as a blind man operated upon has been known to lose his recovered sight by the too rapid admission of the daylight. The priest saw at this moment human nature to its depths; but he remained in a calmness that was awful from its fixity. He stood there a cold alp, white, and reaching to the skies; lofty, inalterable, with granite sides, and

yet beneficent. Prostitutes are beings essentially fitful, who pass without reason from the most dogged distrust to unlimited confidence; in this respect, they are lower than animals. Extreme in everything, in their joy and their despair, their religion and their irreligion, most of them would eventually become insane were it not for the decimating mortality which is peculiar to them, and the few happy chances which raise some few among them from the slough in which they live.

To penetrate the misery of that dreadful life, one must have seen how far the poor creatures can go into madness without remaining there; and the violent ecstasy of La Torpille kneeling at the priest's feet may give some idea of it. She looked at the liberating paper with an expression forgotten by Dante, for it surpassed the revelations of the Inferno. But reaction came with her tears. Esther rose, cast her arms around the priest's neck, laid her head upon his breast, kissing the coarse cloth that covered that heart of steel as though she would force her way to it. She seized his hands and kissed them; she used, unconsciously, in the fervor of her gratitude, the cajolery of caresses, lavishing sweet names upon him, and crying out, amid these honeyed sentences, "Give it to me! Give it to me! Give it to me!" with a hundred different intonations. She happed him with her tenderness; she held him by her eyes with an eagerness that left him no defence, until at last she benumbed his anger. The priest knew then how and why she had obtained her name. He comprehended how impossible it was to withstand the love of such a being; he divined Lucien's love, and all that had seduced the poet in him.

Such a passion hides, amid a thousand charms, a barbed hook which fastens, above all, upon the soul of an artist. These passions, inexplicable to the many, are perfectly explained by the thirst for the *beau idéal* which distinguishes creative beings. Is it not creating to purify such a creature? What enticement it offers to bring moral beauty and physical beauty into harmony! What joy of pride if successful! What a noble task is that which has no instrument but love! These alliances, illustrated in the lives of Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Alcibiades, Pompey, and so monstrous in the eyes of the many, are founded on the same sentiment as that which led Louis XIV. to build Versailles; which drives men into ruinous enterprises, converts miasmatic swamps into flowery mounds surrounded by flowing waters, puts lakes at the top of hills, as did the Prince de Conti at Nointel, or transports Swiss scenery to Cassan, as did Bergeret the farmer-general. It is Art making irruption into the domain of Morals.

The priest, ashamed of having yielded to any gentleness, pushed the girl hastily away. She sat down, mortified, for he said, harshly, "You are a courtesan, and will always be one."

Then he replaced the letter in his belt. Like a child, which has but one desire in its head, Esther never ceased to gaze at the place in the belt where the paper lay.

"My child," said the priest, after a pause, "your mother was a Jewess, and you have never been baptized; but neither have you ever been taken to the synagogue. You are in the religious limbo of a little child —"

"A little child!" she said, softly.

"Just as you are a mere number on the registers of the police, outside of all other social beings," continued the impassible priest. "If love, seen by a snatch of fancy, made you believe three months ago that you were born again, you must surely feel that since that day you are still in childhood. You must let yourself be guided as though you were indeed a child; you must change yourself wholly, and I will take upon me to make you unrecognizable. But, first, you must forget Lucien."

The poor girl's heart was broken by the sentence; she raised her eyes to the priest and made a sign of negation; she was incapable of speech, perceiving once more the executioner in the deliverer.

"You must renounce the sight of him, at least," he continued. "I shall place you in a religious establishment where young girls of the best families receive their education. You will become a Catholic, and you will be instructed in the practice of Christian duty; you will learn religion. After that you will leave the place a virtuous young girl, chaste, pure, and well trained, if —"

He paused and raised his finger.

"If," he resumed, "you feel the strength to leave behind you, here, the Torpille."

"Ah!" cried the poor thing, to whom each word had seemed like a note of music, at the sound of which the gates of Paradise were slowly opening. "Ah! if it were only possible to pour out, here, all my blood and take another —"

"Listen to me."

She was silent.

"Your future depends on your power of forgetting. Reflect on the obligations you will have upon you. One word, one gesture that betrays the Torpille puts an end forever to your being Lucien's wife; a word said in a dream, an involuntary thought, an immodest look, an impatient motion, a recollection of the past, a sign of the head which reveals what you know or what others have known to your disgrace —"

"Ah, father!" cried the girl with sacred enthusiasm, "to walk on red-hot iron and smile, to wear a corset armed with spikes and dance, to eat my bread mingled with ashes, and drink wormwood, all, all would be sweet, easy!"

She fell again on her knees and kissed his shoes, her tears moistened them; she clung to his legs, murmuring senseless words amid the tears that joy had brought. Her beautiful fair hair lay like a carpet at the feet of this celestial messenger; then, rising, she looked at him and saw how hard and stern he was.

"Have I offended you?" she said, all trembling. "I have heard of a woman like me who washed the feet of Jesus Christ with perfumes. Alas! virtue has made me poor; I have only tears to give."

"Did you not hear me?" he replied in a cruel voice. "I told you that you must leave the house where I shall now place you so changed physically and morally that none who ever knew you can call 'Esther,' to your shame. Last night, the love you boast of had not given you the power to bury the prostitute so that she could never reappear; no other worship than that of God will hide her forever."

"God has sent you to me," she said.

"If, during your education, Lucien discovers you, all is lost," he resumed; "remember that."

"Who will console him?" she whispered.

"For what have you ever consoled him?" asked the priest, in a voice through which, for the first time, was heard a tremor.

"I do not know," she answered, "but he is often sad."

"Sad!" repeated the priest; "has he not told you why?"

"Never," she said.

"He is sad because he loves a creature like you," he cried.

"Alas! he may well be," she answered with deep humility. "I am the most despicable creature of my sex; I could only find favor in his eyes by the force of my love."

"That love should give you courage to obey me blindly. If I took you immediately to the house where your education will be given to you, all the people here would tell Lucien that you had gone with a priest, and he might trace you. Therefore, this day week, after my visit is forgotten, leave the house alone at seven in the evening, and enter a hackney-coach, which I will send to the corner of the rue des Frondeurs. During this week avoid seeing Lucien; find some pretext to keep him away; but if he comes, go to a friend's room. I shall know if you see him. If you do, all is at an end; you will not see me again. You will need these eight days to give you a decent outfit," he added, laying a purse upon the table. "In your air,

in your clothes, there is that unspeakable something so well known to all Parisians which reveals what you have been. Have you never met in the streets or on the boulevards a modest, virtuous young girl walking with her mother?"

"Yes, to my sorrow! The sight of a mother with her daughter is the greatest of our punishments; it stirs the remorse which is lurking in our minds. It tortures us. I know but too well what is needful for me."

"Very good; then you know how you ought to look on Sunday next," said the priest, rising.

"Oh, wait," she said; "teach me a real prayer before you go, — that I may pray to God."

It was a moving thing to see the priest teaching the unfortunate girl to say the Lord's Prayer and the "Hail, Mary" in her own language.

"It is very beautiful," said Esther, when she had at last repeated without a blunder those two magnificent and well-known expressions of catholic faith.

"What is your name?" she said to the priest as he bade her adieu.

"Carlos Herrera," he replied. "I am a Spaniard, banished from my country."

Esther took his hand and kissed it. She was no longer a courtesan, but an angel rising from her fall.

## III.

### AN INTERIOR AS WELL KNOWN TO SOME AS UNKNOWN TO OTHERS.

In an institution celebrated for the religious and aristocratic education which is there given to young girls, on a Monday morning early in the month of March, the pupils noticed that their charming ranks were increased by the presence of a new-comer, whose beauty triumphed without gainsaying, not merely over that of her companions, but over the particular beauties that were perfect in each. In France it is extremely rare, not to say impossible, to meet with the thirty famous perfections described in Persian verse, and carved, it is said, on the walls of the harems, — thirty perfections which are necessary to a woman before she can be accounted as absolutely beautiful. As for the imposing collection of beauties which sculpture endeavors to render, and which she has rendered in a few rare instances, like the Diana and the Venus Callipyge, it is the privileged possession of Greece and Asia Minor.

Esther came from that cradle of the human race, the native land of beauty; her mother was a Jewess. The Jews, though so often deteriorated by contact with other peoples, show among their various tribes strata, or veins, through which is still preserved the

splendid type of Asiatic beauty. Esther could have won the prize in a seraglio; she possessed the thirty beauties harmoniously blended. Far from doing injury to the finish of her form and the freshness of its envelope, her peculiar life had communicated to her a nameless something of the woman, — a something that is no longer the smooth closed bud, or unripe fruit, nor has it yet the warm and glowing tones of maturity; the flower is still there. A few months more spent in dissipation and she might have been too plump. This richness of health, this perfection of animal life in a creature to whom physical pleasure stood in place of thought, ought to be an important fact to the eyes of physiologists.

By a rare, not to say impossible, circumstance in very young girls, her hands, which were incomparably noble, were soft, transparent, and white as those of a woman on the birth of her second child. She had precisely the feet and hair so justly celebrated in the Duchesse de Berry, — hair which no coiffeur's hand could hold, so abundant was it, and so long that when it fell to the ground it lay there in circles; for Esther was of that medium height which allows a woman to be a sort of plaything, to be lifted, and even carried without fatigue. Her skin, delicate as rice-paper, of a warm amber-color, with rosy veins, shone without being dry, and was soft without moisture. Vigorous to excess, yet delicate in appearance, Esther attracted immediate attention by a trait remarkable in the figures which Raffaelle has more artistically outlined than other masters, for Raffaelle is the painter who has studied most and rendered best the Jewish beauty.

This wonderful trait was produced by the depth of the space below the brow, in which the eye revolved as if detached from its setting, and the curve of which, clearly defined, was like the outline of an arch. When youth adorns with its pure and diaphanous tints this beautiful curve, surmounted by eyebrows the spring of which is imperceptible; when light, gliding along that inner circle, takes a pale rose tint, there are treasures of tenderness lying there to content a lover, and be the despair of Art. These luminous folds, in which the shadows take golden tints, this tissue, which possesses the consistence of a nerve and the flexibility of a delicate membrane, are Nature's highest effort. The eye in repose lies there like some miraculous egg on a couch of silken fibres. But later in life this marvel turns to awful melancholy, — when passions have charred those supple outlines, when sorrows have wrinkled that nest of fibres.

Esther's origin was plainly seen in this oriental placing of her eyes, which were fringed with Turkish lashes; their color was the gray of slate, changing in a strong light to the blue-black tint of a raven's wing. The extreme tenderness of her glance could alone soften the dazzling light of it. It is only the races which have come from deserts that possess in the eye the power of fascination over every one, — for all women can fascinate some one. Their eyes retain, no doubt, something of the infinite their race has contemplated. Did Nature, with her foresight, furnish their retinas with some reflector to enable them to bear the dazzle of the sand, the floods of sunlight, the hot cobalt of the ether? Do human beings take, like other

creations, something from the centres on which they develop and keep through centuries and eras that which they have taken? The great solution of the problem of races lies, perhaps, in this very question. Instincts are living facts, the cause of which is in a felt necessity. The animal species are the result of the exercise of instincts. To convince ourselves of this truth, so long sought after, it is enough to apply to troops of men the observation recently made on flocks of Spanish and English sheep, which, on the level meadows where grass is plentiful, feed closely pressed together, but disperse upon the hillsides where grass is scarce Transport these two species of sheep from their own land to France or Switzerland, and you will find the hill sheep feeding apart on the plain, and the plain sheep huddling closely together on an alp. Even many generations will scarcely change acquired and transmitted instincts. At the end of a hundred years the mountain spirit will reappear in refractory lambs, just as, after eighteen hundred years of banishment, the East shone in the eyes and in the face of Esther. The glance of those eyes exerted no terrible fascination. It cast a gentle warmth; it moved to tenderness without startling; the hardest wills were melted in that soft glow. Esther vanquished hatred; she had magnetized the depraved of Paris. It was this glance and her soft, smooth skin which had won her the terrible nickname, the revelation of which had sent her to seek the grave. All else about her was in harmony with these characteristics of the Peri of the deserts. Her forehead was resolute, and proud in form; her nose, like that of the Arabs, delicate, thin,

with oval nostrils well-placed and turning upward at the edges. Her fresh, red mouth was like a rose unblighted; the orgies of her life had left no trace upon it. The chin, modelled as if some loving sculptor had polished its *contour*, was white as milk. One only thing, which betrayed the courtesan who had fallen low, she had been unable to remedy, — her split and defaced nails needed time to recover their naturally elegant shape, deformed by the commonest work of the household.

The pupils began by feeling jealous of these miracles of beauty, but they ended by admiring them. A week had not gone by before they attached themselves to the simple, natural Esther; they were interested in the secret misfortunes of a girl who, at eighteen years of age, could neither read nor write; to whom all knowledge and all instruction were new things; and who was about to procure for the archbishop the glory of a conversion from Judaism to Christianity, and for the convent the pleasures of a baptismal fête. They forgave her beauty, knowing themselves her superiors by education. Esther soon acquired the manners, the soft voice, the carriage, the attitudes of these well-bred young girls; in fact, she recovered her original nature. The change was so complete that, on the occasion of his first visit, Herrera was amazed, he whom nothing in the world seemed ever to surprise; and the superiors of the convent congratulated him on his ward. These women had never, in their career of teaching, met with a more lovable nature, more Christian meekness, a truer modesty, and so great a desire for instruction. When a girl has suffered the evils

which had overwhelmed this poor creature, and she looks for such a recompense as that the Spaniard had offered to Esther, it would be strange if she did not renew the miracles of the early Church, which the Jesuits are now reviving in Paraguay.

"She is edifying," said the superior, kissing her on the forehead.

That expression, which is essentially catholic, tells all.

During the recreation hours Esther questioned her companions, though reservedly, on the simplest things of their social life, which to her were like the first wonders of existence to an infant. When told she was to wear white on the day of her baptism and her first communion, white ribbons, white shoes, a white badge, she burst into tears, to the amazement of her comrades. It was the reversal of the scene of Jephthah on the mountain. But Esther was afraid of being suspected, and she ascribed this strange distress to the joy the mere thought of the ceremony caused her. The gulf between the habits and morals she was quitting and those she sought to take was greater even than that between civilization and a state of barbarism; and Esther had the natural grace and naïveté and also the depth of nature which characterizes the wonderful heroine of the "Puritans of America." But she had also, without being aware of it herself, a love in her heart which was gnawing it; a strong love, a desire more violent in her who knew all than it is in any virgin heart that knows nothing, though these desires may have the same cause and the same object.

During the first few months the novelty of a cloi-

tered life, the surprises of her education, the work she learned to do, the exercises of religion, the fervor of her sacred resolution, the sweetness of the affections she inspired, in short, the employment of the faculties of an awakened intellect, all assisted in repressing her memories, even the efforts of the new memory she was acquiring; for she had as much to unlearn as to learn. Several memories are in us: body and mind have each a memory. Nostalgia, for example, is a disease of the physical memory. After the first three months, the vigor of this virgin soul which was stretching with outspread wings toward heaven, was not conquered, but shackled by a dumb resistance the cause of which was unknown to Esther herself. Like the sheep of Scotland she wanted to browse apart; she could not vanquish the instincts developed by debauchery. The muddy streets of the Paris she had abjured called to her. Did the chains of her horrible broken habits still hold to her by some forgotten link? Did she feel them as surgeons say old soldiers suffer in the limbs that have long been amputated? Had vice and its excesses so penetrated to the marrow of her bones that the holy waters had not yet touched the hidden demon? Was the sight of him for whom she was making so many angelic efforts necessary to one whom God must surely pardon for mingling human love with sacred love? The one had led to the other. Did there occur in her a displacement of the vital force which brought with it inevitable suffering? All is doubt and darkness in a situation which those who have knowledge refuse to examine, considering the subject immoral and too compromising, — as if the physician,

the writer, the priest, and the statesman, were not above suspicion. Nevertheless, one physician, whose work was stopped by death, did have the courage to begin such studies, — alas! left incomplete.

Perhaps the black melancholy to which Esther fell a prey, which obscured, like a pall, her happy life, shared in all these causes; and — incapable of guessing its nature — perhaps she suffered as the sick who are ignorant of medicine and of surgery suffer. The fact is strange and even fantastic. Abundant and wholesome nourishment substituted for inflammatory and detestable food Esther could not assimilate. A pure and regular life divided between moderate work and recreation, put in place of a disorderly life in which the pleasures were as horrible as the pains, — this life was crushing down the young pupil. The cool repose, the calm of nights substituted for extreme fatigue and cruel agitations, caused fever of which the symptoms escaped both the eye and finger of the infirmary nurse. In short, welfare and happiness succeeding to evil and misery, security to anxiety, were as fatal to Esther as her past wretchedness would have been to her young companions. Born in corruption, implanted there, there she had developed. Her infernal native land still exercised its power over her, in spite of the sovereign orders of her absolute will. What she hated was life to her; what she loved was killing her. Her faith had become so ardent that her piety rejoiced the hearts about her. She loved to pray. She had opened her soul to the light of true religion, which she received without effort, without doubt; but in her the body thwarted the soul at every turn.

Carp were taken from a muddy pond and placed in a marble basin filled with clearest water, to satisfy a desire of Madame de Maintenon, who fed them with scraps from the royal table. The carp died. Animals may be devoted to man, but man can never communicate to them the leprosy of flattery. A courtier remarked upon the resistance of the fish. "They are like me," said the uncrowned queen, "they regret their mud." That saying was Esther's history at the period of which we speak.

Sometimes the poor girl was impelled to wander restlessly through the beautiful gardens of the convent; she went eagerly from tree to tree; she darted despairingly into shady corners, looking for — what? She did not know; but she succumbed to the devil, she coquetted with the trees, saying words she never uttered. At other times she would glide along the walls in the darkness, like an eel, without a shawl and her shoulders bare. Often, in the chapel during the services, she would kneel with her eyes fixed on the altar; those about her admired her. Tears came to her, but they were tears of rage; instead of the sacred images she wished to see, the flaming nights when she had led the revels, as Habeneck leads a symphony of Beethoven at the Conservatoire, came back to her, dishevelled, furious, brutal. Outwardly she was like a virgin who belongs to earth by her feminine form only; within, an imperial Messalina raged. She alone was in the secret of this struggle of the devil against the angel. When the superior remarked on the pains with which she had dressed her hair, and rebuked her, she changed it with sweet and prompt obedience; she

was ready to cut the hair from her head if her mother ordered it. This nostalgia, for such it was, was pitifully touching in a girl who would rather die than return to her impure native land.

She grew pale and thin, and changed greatly. The superior lessened her studies, and took so interesting a pupil to her own apartment to question her. Esther seemed happy; took pleasure in her companions; felt no ill in any vital part, — and yet her vitality was attacked. She regretted nothing; she desired nothing. The superior, surprised at the girl's answers, knew not what to think, seeing her so evidently the prey to a consuming languor. The physician of the convent was called in as soon as the pupil's condition seemed serious; but Esther's previous life was unknown to him, and he could not suspect it. The mother superior, under a sense of danger, sent for the Abbé Herrera. The Spaniard came, saw Esther's desperate condition, and said a few words in private to the physician. After this conversation the man of science informed the man of faith that the best remedy would be to take the girl a journey to Italy. The abbé would not consent to the journey being made before Esther's baptism and first communion.

"How long before they take place?" asked the physician.

"A month," said the superior.

"She will be dead."

"Yes, but in a state of grace and saved," said the abbé.

The religious point governs all questions political, civil, and vital, in Spain. The doctor made no reply

to the Spaniard; he turned to the mother superior; but the terrible abbé took him by the arm and stopped him.

"Not one word, monsieur," he said.

The physician, though religious and monarchical, cast a look of tender pity upon Esther. The girl was beautiful as a lily bending on its stalk.

"To the mercy of God, then!" he cried as he went away.

The same day Esther was taken by her protector, the abbé, to the Rocher de Cancale, for the desire of saving her suggested a strange expedient to the priest; he would try dissipation, — two dissipations: an excellent dinner, which might recall to the girl's mind her past excesses; and the Opera, which would give her worldly images. It needed all his overwhelming authority to induce the young novice to enter such scenes. At the Opera he placed her in a box where she could not be seen. But these remedies were of no avail; the convent pupil felt a disgust for the dinner and the theatre, a deep repugnance for what she did, and fell back into sadness.

"She is dying of love for Lucien," thought Herrera, who now resolved to sound the depths of that soul and know what he could exact of it.

There came a day at last when the poor girl was sustained only by her moral force; the body was about to give way. The priest had calculated the moment with the awful practical sagacity shown in the olden time by executioners when applying the "question." He found his ward in the garden, sitting on a bench beside a trellis on which an April sun was flickering. She

seemed cold, and to be trying to warm herself; her comrades watched with pitying interest her pallor like that of withered grass, her eyes like those of a dying doe, her attitude expressive of melancholy. Esther rose to go forward and meet the Spaniard, with a movement which showed how little life she had, and, let us say, how little desire she had to live. This poor Bohemian, this bruised wild swallow, excited, for the second time, the pity of Carlos Herrera. That gloomy minister, whom it seemed that God would employ only in the accomplishment of his dire punishments, received the feeble creature with a smile that expressed as much bitterness as gentleness, as much revenge as charity. Trained to meditation and to self-examination during her semi-monastic life, Esther felt for the second time a strong distrust of her protector; but she was reassured, as on the first occasion, by his words.

"My dear child," he said, "why have you never spoken to me of Lucien?"

"I had promised you," she answered, quivering from head to foot with a convulsive motion, "I had sworn to you never to pronounce his name."

"But you have not ceased to think of him?"

"That is my only blame. I think of him at all times, and when you appeared I was saying to myself his name."

"Absence from him is killing you?"

For all answer Esther inclined her head on her breast like one at the point of death.

"If you saw him again —"

"I could live," she said.

"Do you think of him with your soul only?"

"Oh, father," she said, "love cannot be divided into parts!"

"Daughter of an accursèd race! I have done my best to save you; I return you to your fate. You shall see him again."

"Why curse my happiness? Can I not love Lucien and practise virtue, which I love as much as I love him? Am I not ready to die for it, as I am to die for him? Am I not dying for those two fanaticisms, for the virtue which made me worthy of him, and for him who cast me into the arms of virtue? Yes, ready to die without seeing him, — ready to live by seeing him. God will judge me."

Her color had returned, her paleness had taken a golden hue. Once more her grace came back to her.

"The day after that on which you are cleansed by the waters of baptism you shall see Lucien again; if you think you can live virtuously in living for him you shall not again be separated from him."

The priest was forced to lift her up, for her knees gave way beneath her. The poor girl fell as if the earth had given way at her feet. The abbé placed her on the bench, and when her voice came back to her she said: —

"Why not to-day?"

"Would you rob Monseigneur of the triumph of your conversion and baptism? You are too near to Lucien; you are far from God."

"Yes; I thought of nothing!"

"You will never be of any religion," said the priest, with a motion of the deepest sarcasm.

"God is good!" she answered. "He reads my heart."

Vanquished by the simplicity of soul which shone in Esther's voice, look, gestures, and attitude, Herrera kissed her for the first time upon her forehead.

"The libertines have rightly named you," he said; "you would seduce the very elect. A few days and you shall both be free."

"Both!" she repeated, in a tone of ecstasy.

This scene, viewed from a distance by the pupils and the superiors, struck them with a sense that they had looked upon some magical operation. The girl was changed. She reappeared in her true nature of love, — gentle, winning, affectionate, and gay; in short, she was resuscitated.

## IV.

### IN WHICH WE LEARN HOW MUCH OF A PRIEST THERE WAS IN THE ABBÉ DON CARLOS HERRERA.

Herrera lived in the rue Cassette, near Saint-Sulpice, the church he had selected for his religious duties. This church, cold and barren, suited a Spaniard whose religion partook of that of the Dominicans. A true son of the crafty policy of Ferdinand VII., he was sent to do all the ill he could to the constitutional cause, aware that this devotion could never be rewarded until the restoration of the "Rey netto." Carlos Herrera had given himself body and soul to the *camarilla* at the moment when the Cortès seemed not likely to be overthrown. To the world this conduct proclaimed him a superior soul. The expedition of the Duc d'Angoulême took place, King Ferdinand reigned, but Don Carlos Herrera did not return to Madrid to claim the reward of his services. Protected against curiosity by diplomatic silence, he gave as the reason of his continued stay in Paris his strong affection for Lucien de Rubempré, to which affection on the part of the diplomatist the young man owed the ordinance of the king permitting him to take the name and arms of his mother's family.

Herrera lived, as live traditionally all priests employed on secret missions, very obscurely. He accom-

plished his religious duties at Saint-Sulpice, never went out except on business, and then at night and in a carriage. The day was spent by him in the Spanish *siesta*, which places sleep between the two repasts, and occupies the very hours when Paris is most tumultuous and busy. The Spanish cigar also played its part, and consumed as much time as it did tobacco. Laziness is a mask as well as gravity, which is also laziness. Herrera lived in one wing of the house, on the second floor; Lucien occupied the other wing. The two suites were separated, and also united, by the grand reception-rooms, the ancient magnificence of which was equally in harmony with the grave ecclesiastic and the youthful poet. The court-yard of this mansion was gloomy. Large trees shaded the garden. Silence and discreet seclusion are always noticeable in the dwellings selected by priests. Herrera's lodging can be described in one word, — cells. That of Lucien, brilliant with luxury and supplied with every refinement of comfort, combined all requisites for the life of the dandy, poet, and writer, ambitious, worldly, proud, and also vain, — a careless being, yet desirous of order; one of those incomplete geniuses who have some force to desire and to conceive (which are, perhaps, the same thing), but are powerless to execute.

The two, Lucien and Herrera, formed a policy; in that, no doubt, lay the secret of their union. Elderly men, in whom the action of life is displaced and diverted into the sphere of abstract interests, often feel the need of some fresh machine, some young and ardent actor to accomplish their projects. Richelieu long sought for a handsome moustached face

to attract and divert the women he had to manage. Not comprehended by giddy youths, he was forced to banish the mother of his master and frighten the queen, after endeavoring vainly to make them each in love with himself, — he being not of a style to please queens. No matter what men may do, they must, in a life of ambition, bring up sooner or later against a woman, and at the moment usually when they least expect it. However powerful a great statesman may be, he needs a woman to oppose to a woman, as the Dutch cut diamonds with diamonds. Rome, at the summit of her power, obeyed this necessity. See how the life of Mazarin, the Italian cardinal, was dominant in another way than that of Richelieu. Richelieu was opposed by the great lords, and laid the axe at their roots; he died at the height of his power, worn out with the duel, in which he had had no helper but a Capuchin monk. Mazarin was repulsed by Noblesse and Bourgeoisie united, both armed and sometimes victoriously able to put Royalty to flight; but the servitor of Anne of Austria, though he cut off no head, vanquished all France, and formed Louis XIV., who accomplished Richelieu's work by strangling the Noblesse with the golden bow-strings of the harem of Versailles. Madame de Pompadour dead, Choiseul was powerless.

Was Carlos Herrera imbued with such doctrines? Did he do wisely for himself sooner than Richelieu did? Had he chosen a Cinq-Mars in Lucien, — a faithful Cinq-Mars? No one could answer these questions or measure the ambition of that Spaniard, nor could any foresee what his end would be. These

inquiries put by those who were able to cast an eye on this union, which was kept secret for some time, tend towards the disclosure of a dreadful mystery, the truth of which Lucien had only known within a few days. Don Carlos was ambitious for both; that fact was plainly demonstrated to every one who knew them, and all believed that Lucien was the natural son of the priest.

Fifteen days after Lucien's reappearance at the Opera, which cast him into the Parisian world sooner than the abbé wished (for he wanted more time to arm him against society), Lucien had three fine horses in his stable; a coupé for use at night, a cabriolet and tilbury for the morning. He dined out daily. Herrera's expectations were realized; dissipation laid hold of his pupil, but he thought this needful to create a diversion to the young man's desperate love for Esther. But, after squandering some forty thousand francs in folly, Lucien was only the more bent on recovering Esther, for whom he searched pertinaciously; not finding her, she became to him what the game is to the hunter. Could Herrera comprehend the nature of a poet's love? When once that sentiment has entered the head of those great little men as it has their heart and their senses, the poet becomes as superior to humanity through love as he is through the power of his fancy. Owing to a caprice of the present generation the rare faculty of expressing nature by images on which he imprints both sentiment and ideas, the poet gives to his love the wings of his mind; he feels and he paints, he acts and he meditates, he multiplies his sensations by thought, he triples present felicity by aspiration of the

future and memory of the past; he mingles with his love all the exquisite enjoyments of the soul which make him the prince of artists. The passion of a poet then becomes a great poem in which it often happens that human proportions are surpassed. The poet places his mistress higher than women desire to be held. He changes, like the noble knight of La Mancha, a girl of the fields to a princess. He puts to his own use the wand with which he touches all things and makes them marvellous; he magnifies his sensuous pleasures by his adorable instinct of the ideal. Therefore this love is a model of passion; it is excessive in everything, — in its hopes, in its despair, in its anger, its sadness, its joy; it flies, it bounds, it creeps; it resembles none of the agitations which lay hold of common men; it is to the bourgeois love what the eternal torrent of the Alps is to the rivulet of the plain. These rare geniuses are so seldom understood that they waste their being on false hopes; they consume their vitality in the search for their ideal mistresses; they die like the beautiful insects adorned for fêtes of love by Nature, the great poet, and crushed while yet virgin beneath the foot of some unconscious passer. But, lo! another danger! When they meet the form which responds to their spirit, — sometimes a baker's girl, — they do as Raffaelle did, as the beautiful insect does, they die for the Fornarina. Lucien had reached this point. His poetic nature, necessarily extreme in everything, in good as in evil, had divined the angel in the prostitute, more smeared by corruption than corrupted; he saw her white-winged, pure, mysterious, as if she had made herself for him, divining that he needed her thus.

Towards the end of the month of May, 1825, Lucien had lost all his vivacity; he no longer went out; dined daily with Herrera, was pensive, did some work, read collections of diplomatic treaties, and sat like a Turk on his divan smoking three or four hookas a day. His groom employed more time in cleaning the tubes of the pretty instrument than in currying the horses or decking them with roses for the Bois. The day on which the Spaniard saw Lucien's forehead pallid, and recognized the signs of illness from the madness of thwarted love, he resolved to go to the bottom of this heart of man upon which he had now built his own life.

On a fine evening, when Lucien, sitting in an armchair, was idly gazing through the trees in the garden at the setting sun, casting the mist of his perfumed smoke in prolonged and regular exhalations, as preoccupied smokers do, he was suddenly drawn from his revery by a heavy sigh. Looking up, he saw the abbé standing before him with his arms crossed.

"So you are there," he said.

"And have been for some time," replied the priest. "My thoughts have been following yours."

Lucien understood the meaning of the words.

"I never claimed to have an iron nature like yours," he said. "Life is to me, by turns, first heaven and then hell; but when, by chance, it is neither the one nor the other, then it bores me; I am bored."

"Why? — when you have so many magnificent prospects before you?"

"When one does not believe in such prospects, or when they are too mysteriously veiled — "

"No nonsense!" said the priest. "It would be

far more worthy of you and of me if you opened your heart to me. There is between us what ought never to have been, a secret. This secret has lasted sixteen months. You love —"

"Go on."

"— a depraved girl, whom they call La Torpille."

"Well?"

"My son, I permitted you to take a mistress; but a woman in society, young, handsome, influential, and of rank. I chose for you Madame d'Espard, so that you might have no scruple in making her a stepping-stone of fortune; she would never have perverted your heart, she would have left you free. But to love a prostitute of the lowest kind when you have not, like kings, the power of ennobling her, is a monstrous fault."

"Am I the first who has renounced ambition to follow the bent of an ungovernable love?"

"Ah!" said the priest, picking up the mouth-piece of the hookah which Lucien had let drop, and handing it to him. "I note the sarcasm. But why not combine both ambition and love? Child, you have in your old Herrera a mother whose devotion is boundless."

"I know it, old friend," said Lucien, pressing the priest's hand and shaking it.

"You wanted the gewgaws of wealth, and you have them. You wanted to shine, and I have guided you into a path of power. I have kissed many dirty hands for your advancement, and you can advance. A little more time, and you will lack nothing that can please and delight either man or woman. Effeminate through your caprices, you are virile in mind; I know you wholly, and I pardon all. You have only to say the

word and all your passions of the hour shall be satisfied. I have enlarged your life by putting upon it that which will make it admired by the greater number, the seal of statecraft and dominion. You shall be as great as you once were small. But we must not break the machine with which we coin the money. I allow all, except the faults which compromise your future. When I open to you the salons of the faubourg Saint-Germain, I forbid you to rake in the gutters. Lucien! I stand like a bar of iron in defence of your interests; I will endure all from you, for you. I have converted your weak throw in the game of life into the successful play of a practised gambler."

Lucien raised his head with an abrupt and furious motion.

"I carried off La Torpille."

"You!" cried Lucien.

In a passion of animal rage Lucien bounded up, threw the jewelled mouth-piece in the face of the priest, and pushed him so violently as to throw over that athletic form.

"I," said the Spaniard, rising and still preserving his terrible gravity.

The black wig had fallen off. A skull, polished like that of a death's head, restored to the man his true physiognomy: it was terrifying. Lucien remained on his divan, with hanging arms, overwhelmed, gazing at the abbé with stupid eyes.

"I carried her off," repeated the priest.

"What have you done with her? Did you carry her away the day after the masked ball?"

"Yes, the day after I saw a being who belonged to

you insulted by rascals whom I would not stoop to even kick — "

"Rascals!" said Lucien, interrupting him; "say rather monsters, beside whom criminals who are guillotined are angels. Do you know what that poor girl had done for three of them? One was for two months her lover; she was poor and earned her bread in the gutter; he himself had not a penny, — like me when you met me near the river. The fellow got up in the night and went to the closet where she kept the remains of her scanty dinner and ate them. She ended by discovering this act; she felt the shame of it; after that she left much more of her food for him; it made her happy. She told this to me, to me only, as we drove back that night from the Opera. The second had robbed a friend, but before the theft could be discovered she lent him the money to replace it, which he has never returned to her. As for the third, she made his fortune by playing a comedy worthy of the genius of Figaro; she passed for his wife and made herself the mistress of a man in power, who thought her the most honest of bourgeoises. To one she gave life, to another honor, to the third fortune; and see how they rewarded her."

"Shall they die?" said Herrera in a muffled voice.

"Ah, there you are! I know you now — "

"No, not yet; hear all, peevish poet! La Torpille no longer exists."

Lucien sprang upon Herrera so vigorously to catch him by the throat that any other man would have been knocked down, but the Spaniard was on his guard, and his arm held Lucien back.

"Listen," he said coldly. "I have made a chaste, religious, well-trained woman of her; a well-bred woman; she is in the road to farther improvement. She may, she should, become under the empire of your love, a Ninon, a Marion Delorme, a Dubarry, as that journalist said at the Opera. You can admit that she is your mistress, or you can stay behind the curtain, which would be the wiser way; either way will bring you profit, pleasure, and progress. But if you are as worldly-wise a man as you are a great poet, Esther will be no more to you than a sister, for later, mark my words, she will extricate us from some difficulty, or play some great card for us; she is worth her weight in gold. Drink, if you will, but do not get drunk. If I had not taken the reins of your passion into my own hands, where would you be now? Here, read," said Herrera, as simply as Talma in "Manlius," which he had never seen.

A paper fell upon the poet's knees, and drew him from the stupefied surprise into which this speech had thrown him. He took and read the first letter ever written by Esther: —

*To Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera:*

My dear Protector, — Will you not believe that gratitude goes before love in my heart when you see that it is to thank you that I employ, for the first time, the faculty of expressing my thoughts in writing, instead of spending it in trying to describe a love which Lucien has, perhaps, forgotten. But I will tell to you, a man of God, what I dare not tell to him, — to him who, for my happiness, is here on earth. The ceremony of yesterday has poured treasures of grace and mercy into my soul, and again I place my destiny

in your hands. If I am to die parted from my beloved, I shall die purified, like the Magdalen, and my soul will become to him the rival of his guardian angel. Can I ever forget the festival of yesterday? How could I ever abdicate the glorious throne to which I rose? Yesterday I cleansed my sins, visibly, in the waters of baptism; I received the sacred body of our Saviour; I became one of his tabernacles. At that moment I heard the songs of angels; I was more than a woman; I was borne to a life of light on a cloud of incense and prayers, decked like a virgin for a celestial spouse. Feeling myself — what I never hoped to be — worthy of Lucien, I abjured unworthy love; I will walk in no other paths than those of virtue. If my body is more feeble than my soul, let it perish. Be the arbiter of my fate; guide me. And if I die, tell Lucien that I died for him in being born to God.

Sunday evening.

Lucien raised his tearful eyes to the abbé.

"You know the apartment of little Caroline Bellefeuille in the rue Taitbout," said the Spaniard. "That poor girl, abandoned by her magistrate, was in great distress; they were about to put an execution in the house. I have bought it, furniture and all. Esther, that angel who talked of rising to the skies, is there, and you can find her."

Lucien had no strength to express his gratitude; he flung himself into the arms of the man he had lately attacked, repaired the insult with a look and the mute effusion of his feelings. Then he rushed down the stairs, threw Esther's address to his groom, and the horses started as if their master's passion inspired their legs.

The next day a man, whom the passers might have judged from his dress to be a disguised gendarme, was

walking up and down the rue Taitbout, looking at a house from which he seemed to expect some one to issue; his step was that of a man under excitement. You will often meet such preoccupied pedestrians in Paris: either real gendarmes, watching some national guard, who is avoiding arrest for misdemeanor; or creditors, waiting to affront a debtor, who keeps himself carefully immured at home; or lovers and husbands, jealous and suspicious; or friends, standing sentinel in behalf of friends. But you will seldom meet a face gleaming with the savage wickedness that lighted that of the sombre athlete who paced the street beneath Esther's windows like a bear in a cage.

About mid-day a window was opened and the blinds thrown back by a woman's hand, and Esther looked out to breathe the air. Lucien was beside her. Any one who had seen them would have been reminded of an English vignette. Esther instantly caught the basilisk eyes of the Spanish priest, and the poor creature, struck by their expression as by a curse, gave a cry of fear.

"The priest is there," she said to Lucien.

"He," he said, smiling, — "he is no more a priest than you are!"

"What is he, then?" she asked, terrified.

"Ha! an old heathen, who believes neither in God nor in the devil," replied Lucien, letting a gleam of light escape him on the secrets of the priest, which might have ruined them both with any other listener than Esther.

As they entered the dining-room, where their breakfast was served, the lovers met Herrera.

"Why are you here?" asked Lucien.

"To bless you!" replied that powerful individual, stopping the couple and obliging them to go back into the *salon*. "Listen, my young lovers! Amuse yourselves, be happy, — that's all very well. Happiness at any price, — that's my doctrine. But you," he said, addressing Esther, — "you whom I dragged from the mud and washed, body and soul, — you must not venture to put yourself across the path of Lucien's advancement. As for you," he added, after a pause, looking at Lucien, "you are no longer a mere poet, to let yourself be sunk in a new Coralie. We are making prose, now. What can the lover of Esther become? Nothing. Can Esther be Madame de Rubempré? No. Well, then, the world, my dear," — he placed his hand on that of Esther, who shuddered and shrank from him as if touched by a snake, — "if you love Lucien, the world must be ignorant of your existence; above all, it must never know that Esther loves Lucien and Lucien loves her. This house will be your prison, my little girl. If you wish to go out, and your health requires it, it must be at night, and in a way that you cannot be seen; for your beauty, your youth, and the distinction you have acquired in the convent would be instantly remarked upon. The day when any one, no matter who," he said, in a terrible tone, accompanied by a still more terrible glance, "discovers that Lucien is your lover, that day will be your last on earth. An ordinance has been procured for that young man which permits him to bear the name and arms of his maternal ancestors. That is not all; the title of marquis has not yet been granted to him. To recover it, he must

marry the daughter of a noble house, to whom the king will grant that favor. This alliance will put Lucien into the society of the court. This youth, of whom I have made a man, will become, first, the secretary of an embassy, and later, an ambassador to one of the German courts; and God — or I, which is more to the purpose — aiding him, he will sit some day on the bench of peers — "

"Or the bench of — " said Lucien, interrupting the so-called priest.

"Silence!" said Carlos, standing in front of Lucien. "Such secrets before a woman!" he whispered.

"Esther, a woman of that kind!" cried the author of the "Daisies."

"Sonnets!" sneered the priest. "All such angels come down to being women, sooner or later. All women have times when they are monkeys and children in one; two beings who can kill us while they amuse us. Esther, my jewel," he said, to the horror-stricken girl, "I have engaged a maid for you, — a creature who belongs to me as if she were my own daughter. You will also have as cook a mulatto woman; she will give a certain air to your establishment. With Europe and Asia (those are the names by which I call them) you can live here for two thousand francs a month, all told, like a queen, — a theatre queen. Europe has been a dress-maker, milliner, and supernumerary; Asia was a cook to a gormandizing milord. These two women will be your household fairies."

Seeing Lucien a mere babe before this strange being, who was guilty at any rate of sacrilege and forgery, the poor woman felt an awful terror and despair to the

very depths of her heart. She could not speak, but dragged Lucien away to the inner room, and whispered, "Is he the devil?"

"Far worse — for me," he said, passionately. "But if you love me, obey him under pain of death."

"Death?" she echoed, still more terrified.

"Death," repeated Lucien. "Alas, my sweetest, no death could be compared to that which would befall me if —"

Esther turned deathly pale as she heard these words and felt herself faltering.

"Well!" cried the false abbé, "have n't you pulled all the leaves from your daisies yet?"

Lucien and Esther returned to the salon, and the poor girl said, without daring to look at the mysterious man: "You will be obeyed, monsieur, as we obey God."

"Right," he replied, "now you may be happy for a certain time at any rate. You will want but few clothes," he added, "as you never go out except at night; that will be economical." The lovers again turned toward the dining-room; but Lucien's master made a gesture which arrested them. "I spoke of your servants, my dear," he said to Esther; "I will now present them to you."

The Spaniard rang twice. The two women whom he had named Europe and Asia appeared, and the reason of their nicknames was at once apparent.

## V.

### TWO WATCH-DOGS.

Asia, who appeared to have been born on the island of Java, presented to the eye, as if to alarm it instantly, the copper visage peculiar to the Malays, flat as a board, the nose seeming to have been pushed in by some powerful compression. The singular position of the maxillary bones gave to the lower part of the face a strong resemblance to that of the larger species of ape. The forehead, though retreating, was not without a certain intelligence produced by cunning. Two flaming little eyes had the calmness of those of tigers; but they never looked you in the face. Asia seemed to be afraid of terrifying her companions. The lips, of a pale blue, disclosed teeth of dazzling whiteness, but overlapping. The general expression of this animal countenance was villanous. Her hair, shining and oily like the skin of the face, lay in two black bands on either side of a rich silken turban. Her ears, extremely pretty, had in them two large brown pearls for ornament. Short and thick-set, Asia resembled certain comical figures which the Chinese permit themselves to paint on their boxes; or rather, to speak more precisely, to those Hindu idols, the type of which we think could never exist until some traveller meets with it. Seeing this monster, dressed in a stuff gown and a white apron, Esther shuddered.

"Asia," said the Spaniard, to whom the woman raised her head with a movement that was comparable to that of a dog looking at his master; "this is your mistress."

He pointed to Esther in her morning-gown. Asia looked at the young sylph with an expression that was somewhat sorrowful; though at the same time a stifled gleam shot from her half-closed eyelids at Lucien, who looked divinely handsome at that moment. Italian genius may invent the tale of Othello, and English genius may show it on the stage, but nature alone is able to put into the human glance the complete and magnificent expression of jealousy. Esther saw it, and she gripped the Spaniard by the arm, setting in her nails as a cat would have clung to save itself from falling down a precipice. The Spaniard said three or four words in an unknown language to the Asiatic monster, who at once knelt down at Esther's feet and kissed them.

"She can cook in a way to put Carême beside himself," said the Spaniard to Esther. "Asia knows how to do everything. She will send up a simple dish of vegetables which will make you wonder if the angels have not been down from heaven to add some celestial herb to it. She goes to market every morning herself, and fights like the devil that she is, to get things at the lowest price. Moreover, she will tire out all inquisitive people with her discretion. As you are to be thought to have come from India, Asia's presence will assist the fable; she's a Parisian born to be of any country she chooses — though my advice to you is not to be a foreigner. Europe, what say you?"

Europe was a perfect contrast to Asia, being as trig a little soubrette as Monrose ever desired for an opponent on the stage. Slim, and apparently giddy, with a sharp little nose and the face of a weasel, Europe presented to all observers a face worn out by Parisian corruptions; the wan, tired face of a girl fed on raw apples, lymphatic yet wiry, slack but tenacious. With her little foot advanced, her hands in the pockets of her apron, she wriggled while standing still, out of mere excitability. A grisette and a figurante, she must, in spite of her youth, have played various rôles in life. Naturally depraved, like so many of her kind, she may have robbed her parents or sat on the benches of the correctional police. Asia inspired fear, but she was known for what she was in a moment; she descended in a direct line from Locusta; whereas Europe inspired a perpetual anxiety, which could only deepen as her service continued; her corruption seemed to have no limit; she would, as the saying is, have balked at nothing.

"Perhaps madame comes from Valenciennes," said Europe, in a hard, thin voice. "I do. Will monsieur please to tell us," she added, addressing Lucien, "what name he gives to madame?"

"Madame van Bogseck," said the Spaniard, reversing two letters in Esther's name. "Madame is a Jewess, originally from Holland, the widow of a merchant, and ill of a liver complaint brought back from Java. Of no great fortune to excite curiosity —"

"Only enough to live on, and we are to complain of her economies," suggested Europe.

"Precisely," said the Spaniard, nodding his head

"Imps of Satan!" he cried in his terrible voice, detecting looks between Europe and Asia which displeased him; "remember what I have told you; you serve a queen; and you are to serve her with devotion, as you would me. Neither the porter, nor the neighbors, nor any one else is to know what passes here. It is your business to mislead curiosity, should any be shown. And madame," he continued, putting his large hairy hand on Esther's arm, "madame must not commit the smallest imprudence; you will prevent it if need be, but — always respectfully. Europe, I place you in relation with the outside world; you will attend to madame's dress and purchases; be careful to practise economy. Lastly, let no one, not the most insignificant persons, set foot in this apartment. Between you two the work of taking care of it must be done. My little beauty," he said to Esther, "when you want to go out in the evening tell Europe; she knows where to get you a carriage, and you will have a *chasseur* at your orders, — one of my choosing," he added, "like the other two."

Esther and Lucien were unable to say a word. They listened to the Spaniard and gazed at the two strange characters to whom he gave his orders. To what secret power did he owe the submission, the devotion written upon their faces, one so wickedly rebellious, the other so profoundly cruel? He guessed the thoughts of Esther and of Lucien, who seemed paralyzed, as Paul and Virginia might have been at the sight of two horrible serpents; and he whispered in their ears in a kinder voice: —

"You can trust them as you can me; keep no

secrets from them; that will flatter them. Come, Asia," he said, smiling, "serve the breakfast; and you, my little Europe, put me a knife and fork; the least these children can do is to invite papa to a meal."

When the two women had closed the door and the Spaniard heard Europe going and coming in the adjoining room, he said to Lucien and the young girl, opening and shutting his large hand, "I hold them!" a saying and gesture which made them tremble.

"Where did you find them?" cried Lucien.

"Eh! *parbleu!*" replied the man, "I did not look for them on the steps of the throne. Such as they come from the mud, and they fear to go back into it. Threaten them with *monsieur l'abbé* if they don't do as you wish; you'll see them tremble like mice that hear the cat. I'm a tamer of wild beasts," he said, laughing.

"You seem to me a demon," cried Esther, shrinking to Lucien's side.

"My child, I attempted to give you to heaven; but the repentant Magdalen will always baffle the Church. If there is such a being she'll return to her ways in paradise. You have gained something, however. You learned, over there, things that you never could have known in the infamous sphere in which you lived,—how to behave like a well-bred woman, how to conduct yourself. You owe me nothing," he exclaimed, seeing the expression of gratitude that overspread Esther's face. "I did it all for him," pointing to Lucien. "You are a courtesan, and a courtesan you will continue to be, for, in spite of the theories of those who

raise cattle, no living being can become in this world anything but what he is. The man of the bumps is right; you have the bump of love."

The Spaniard was, as we see, a fatalist, like Napoleon, like Mohammed, and many other great statesmen. Strangely enough, nearly all men of action incline to Fatalism, while the majority of thinkers incline to Providence.

"I don't know what I am," replied Esther, with the gentleness of an angel, "but I love Lucien, and I shall die loving him."

"Come to breakfast," said the Spaniard, roughly, "and pray to heaven that Lucien may not be married soon, for when he does marry you will never see him again."

"His marriage will be my death," she said.

She let the false priest enter the dining-room before her that she might lift herself to Lucien's ear unseen.

"Is it your will," she asked, "that I shall remain under the power of that man who puts those two hyenas to watch me?"

Lucien bowed his head. The poor girl instantly repressed her sadness and seemed joyful; but she was horribly oppressed at heart. It required more than a year of constant and devoted care before she could accustom herself to the presence of the terrible creatures whom Herrera called his watch-dogs.

Lucien's conduct since his return to Paris in company with the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera had been marked by a policy so deep and calculated that it was certain to excite, and did excite, the jealous ill-will of all his former friends, towards whom he attempted no

other vengeance than that of making them furious by his success, his irreproachable style of living, and his method of keeping them all at a distance. The author of "Daisies," the poet once so expansive, so communicative, became cold and reserved. De Marsay, that type adopted by Parisian youth, did not impart to his actions and to his conversation more reserve than did Lucien. As for his wit, the author and journalist had already proved that. De Marsay, to whom some persons compared Lucien, giving their preference to the poet, was petty enough to be annoyed by it. Lucien, who was much in favor with men in secret possession of governmental power, abandoned so completely all desire for literary fame that he was quite indifferent to the success of his novel, republished under its original name, "The Archer of Charles X.," and to the noise made by his collection of sonnets, sold off by Dauriat in a single week.

"A posthumous success," he said, laughing, to Mademoiselle des Touches, who complimented him.

The terrible Spaniard held his creature with an arm of iron in the path which ends in the flourish of trumpets and profits that await the patient politician. Lucien had taken the apartment of Baudenord on the quai Malaquais, so as to be nearer to the rue Taitbout. The abbé had three rooms in the same house on the fourth floor. Lucien kept only one horse for saddle and cabriolet, one servant, and a groom. When he did not dine out he dined with Esther. The abbé kept so close a watch on the household of the quai Malaquais, that Lucien did not spend in all more than ten thousand francs a year. Ten thousand francs suf-

ficed for Esther, thanks to the unremitting and inexplicable devotion of Europe and Asia. Lucien adopted great precaution in going to and from the rue Taitbout; always going there in a hackney coach and driving into the court-yard. His passion for Esther, and the existence of the household in the rue Taitbout remained therefore unknown to the world, and were no injury to any of his political relations and enterprises. No word on the subject ever escaped him. His faults of that kind with Coralie had given him experience. His daily life had the regularity of good society, behind which many a mystery can be hid. He was always to be found at home in the morning from ten o'clock to half-past one; then he went to the Bois or paid visits till five; and he stayed in society at parties or theatres every night till one in the morning. He was seldom seen on foot, and thus he avoided his former acquaintances. When he was saluted by certain journalists and old comrades he replied by an inclination of the head, civil enough to make it impossible to be angry, yet expressive of that cutting disdain which puts an end to all friendly familiarity. He soon rid himself in this way of men whom he no longer wished to know. His old hatred kept him from going to see Madame d'Espard, who had several times made advances to receive him; but when he met her at the houses of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, Mademoiselle des Touches, the Comtesse de Montcornet and others, he treated her with exquisite politeness. This hatred, shared by Madame d'Espard, compelled Lucien to practise some prudence, for we shall see how he deepened it in the marquise by allowing himself a

piece of revenge, which won him, moreover, a strong lecture from the abbé.

"You are not yet powerful enough to revenge yourself on any one, no matter who," said the Spaniard. "When we are travelling under a hot sun, there's no stopping to gather flowers."

There was too much future promise and too much real superiority in Lucien not to make the young men whom his sudden return to Paris with a fortune dazzled and galled, delighted to do him some ill-natured turn. Lucien, who knew he had enemies, was not ignorant of these intentions; for the abbé was constantly warning his adopted son against the treachery of the world and the imprudence so fatal to youth. Lucien was made to relate the events of each day to him. Thanks to the counsels of this mentor, the young man baffled the keenest of all curiosities, — that of society. Protected by his newly acquired English gravity, supported by the redoubts thrown up by diplomatic circumspection, he gave no one the right or the occasion to cast an eye on his affairs. His young and beautiful face had ended by becoming as impassible in society as that of a princess at a public ceremony.

At the beginning of the year 1829, nearly five years after the period at which we have taken up this portion of his history, a prospect presented itself of his marriage to the eldest daughter of the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who had no less than four daughters to establish. No one doubted that the king, in view of such an alliance, would graciously restore to him the title of marquis. Such a marriage would secure his political fortunes; for he would probably be sent at once as

ambassador to a German court. For the last four years, especially, Lucien's conduct had been absolutely irreproachable, thanks to the abbé's scheme, so that de Marsay, that acute social observer, said of him, "That fellow must have some very strong individual behind him."

Lucien had become almost a personage. His passion for Esther had aided him not a little in playing the part of a serious man. A habit of that kind guarantees an ambitious man from much folly; caring for no other woman, he is not caught by reactions of the physical over the mental. As to the happiness enjoyed by Lucien, it was the realization of the penniless poet's dream in a garret. Esther, while reminding him of Coralie, completely effaced her. All loving and devoted women want seclusion, — the life of the pearl in the depths of ocean; but, with most of them, this is only a charming caprice, a temporary pleasure to be talked of, a proof of love which they dream of giving, but only give for a short while, — whereas Esther, always on the morrow of her first happiness, living at all hours for Lucien only, had no impulse of curiosity or desire for change in four years. She gave her whole mind to remaining under the terms of the agreement laid down for her by the fatal hand of the false abbé. Neither did she ever use her power over Lucien to ask him a single question about Herrera, who, indeed, so terrified her imagination that she dared not think of him. The cautious benefits of that inexplicable personage, to whom Esther certainly owed her rescue, her training, the habits of respectable life, and her regeneration, seemed to the girl like advances from hell.

"I must pay for them some day," she said to herself in terror.

On fine evenings she drove out in a hired carriage, always to one of those charming woods in the vicinity of Paris, — Boulogne, Vincennes, Romainville, or Ville d'Avray, — often with Lucien, sometimes alone with Europe. When there she walked about quite fearlessly, for if Lucien was not with her, she was accompanied by a *chasseur*, whose muscle was that of an athlete. This third keeper carried, like English footmen, a cane called *bâton de longueur*, known to all players of single-stick, with which he could defy assailants. In accordance with an order given by the abbé, Esther had never spoken to this man, whose name was Paccard.

Parisians, especially Parisian women, know nothing of the charm of driving out into the woods of a fine night. The silence, the solitude, the balmy air, the moonlight, have the calming effect of a bath. Usually Esther started at ten o'clock, and returned about half-past two. She was late, therefore, in the morning, being seldom up before eleven. Then she bathed, and went through the minutiæ of the toilet, ignored by most of the busy women of Paris as taking too much time, and practised only by great ladies and courtesans who have time on their hands. She was never ready until Lucien came, and then she seemed to him like a flower freshly opened. She had no thought in life but his happiness; she was his as a part of his being; as such she left him the most absolute freedom. Never did she attempt to cast a glance beyond the sphere in which they lived. Happiness has no history, and the tellers of tales in all lands know this so well

that they wind up their stories with one sentence, — "They were happy."

Lucien was thus at liberty to live as he pleased in society, and to follow out what seemed to be the necessities of his position. During these years, when he slowly made his way, he rendered secret services to certain statesmen by aiding their work. In this he showed the utmost discretion. He cultivated, more especially, the society of Madame de Sérizy, with whom, indeed, the *salons* averred he was on the most intimate terms. Madame de Sérizy had won Lucien away from the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who, it was said, no longer cared for him, — a reason given by many women to explain a defeat. Lucien was, so to speak, in the bosom of the Church, being intimate with several women who were friends of the archbishop of Paris. Reserved and discreet, he bided his time patiently. The speech we have quoted of de Marsay (who by this time was married, and made his wife lead the same secluded life that Esther led) contained more than one observation. But the submarine dangers that threatened Lucien's position will appear in the course of this history without further explanation.

## VI.

### AN ABYSS OPENS BENEATH ESTHER'S FEET.

SUCH were the circumstances when, on a fine night in the month of June, 1829, the Baron de Nucingen was returning to Paris from the country-seat of a brother-banker with whom he had dined. The estate was in Brie, twenty-four miles from Paris, and as the baron's coachman had boasted of being able to take his master there and back with the same horses, he naturally drove slowly on the way home. As the carriage entered the wood of Vincennes the coachman, liberally treated at the banker's château, was drunk, and sound asleep though he held the reins. The footman behind was snoring like a top. The baron wanted to think; but the gentle somnolence of digestion laid hold of him on the bridge at Gournay. By the slackness of the reins the horses understood the coachman's state; they heard the bass of the footman's nose, they felt they were masters of the situation, and they profited by this brief half-hour of liberty to go as they pleased. Presently, overcome by the curiosity which everybody must have remarked in domestic animals, they stopped short to examine some other animals, to whom, no doubt, they said in equine language: "To whom do you belong? What do you have to do? Are you happy?"

When the carriage rolled no longer the baron woke up. At first he knew not where he was; then he was

surprised by a celestial vision, which came to him, as nothing else had ever done, without calculation. The moon was so bright he could have read by it; in the silence of the woods at that still hour he saw a woman alone, who, as she was getting into a hired carriage, took notice of the singular spectacle of the sleepy calèche. At sight of this vision the baron felt as though illuminated by an inward light. Seeing herself admired, the young woman lowered her veil with a frightened gesture. The *chasseur* uttered a hoarse order, and the carriage rolled rapidly away. The baron was conscious of an inward convulsion; the blood rushed like fire from his feet to his head, his head sent back the flame to his heart, his throat contracted. The unfortunate man feared an apoplectic indigestion; but, notwithstanding that fear, he sprang to his feet.

"Follow that carriage!" he cried in his German accent. "A hundred francs if you overtake it!"

At the words "a hundred francs," the coachman woke up; the footman behind heard them in his dreams. The baron repeated the order, the coachman put his horses to a gallop, and succeeded in overtaking at the Barrière du Trône a hired carriage similar to the one in which the baron had seen his angel, but which contained the head clerk of a celebrated shop with a lady from the rue Vivienne. The blunder was consternation to the baron.

The Baron de Nucingen was at this time sixty years of age, and absolutely indifferent to all women, including his wife. He boasted of never having known the love that makes a man commit follies. He regarded it as a happiness to have done with women, the best of

whom, he was in the habit of saying, were not worth what they cost. Natural love, artificial love, and self-love, love of ease and of vanity, decent love and conjugal love, eccentric love, the baron had bought all, and knew all, except real love. This love had now descended upon him as an eagle swoops upon its prey, as it descended upon Gentz, the confidant of Prince Metternich. We all know the follies that old diplomat committed for Fanny Ellsler, whose rehearsals took much more of his time than European interests. The woman who had just convulsed the iron-lined money-box called Nucingen appeared to him as one of those women who are unique in their generation. It is not certain that Titian's mistress, or Leonardo's Mona Lisa, or Raffaelle's Fornarina was more beautiful than Esther, in whom the most practised Parisian eye could no longer detect a sign of the courtesan. The baron was, above all, bewildered and dazzled by the air of nobility and distinction which Esther now possessed in the highest degree. During the whole of the following week he went nightly to the Bois de Vincennes; then to the Bois de Boulogne; then to Ville d'Avray, and the woods of Meudon; in short, to all the environs of Paris, without ever meeting Esther. That splendid Jewish figure, which he said was "a form out of the Bible," was always before his eyes, and in the end he lost health and appetite.

Delphine de Nucingen was in the habit of giving Sunday dinners. She had taken that day for her receptions, having remarked that in the great world no one went to the theatres on Sunday, and that the day was generally an unemployed one. The invasion

of the shopkeeping and bourgeois classes have made Sunday as silly a day in Paris as it is wearisome in London. The company at one of these dinners (about three weeks after Nucingen's chance meeting with Esther) consisted of Desplein, the famous surgeon, Keller, Rastignac, de Marsay, du Tillet, all friends of the house, the Comte de Gondreville, father-in law of François Keller, the Chevalier d'Espard, des Lupeaulx, Horace Bianchon, Desplein's favorite pupil, Beaudenord and his wife, the Comte and Comtesse de Montcornet, Blondet, Mademoiselle des Touches and Konti, and finally Lucien de Rubempré, for whom Rastignac had for the last five years shown the warmest friendship, *by order*, as the advertisements say.

"We shall never get rid of that man easily," said Blondet to Rastignac, as Lucien entered the room, handsomer and more fastidiously dressed than ever.

"You had better make a friend of him, for he is formidable," replied Rastignac.

"He?" said de Marsay. "I never heard of people being formidable unless their position was clear; and his is more unattacked than unassailable. What does he live on? Where does his money come from? He has, to my knowledge, some sixty thousand francs of debt upon him."

"He has found a rich protector in a Spanish priest, who has taken a fancy to him," said Rastignac.

"He is to marry the eldest Mademoiselle de Grandlieu," said Mademoiselle des Touches.

"Yes; but," said the Chevalier d'Espard, "he is required to buy an estate with a revenue of thirty thousand francs a year to secure the sum he settles on

the bride. To do that he needs a million, — more than he can pick up at the feet of any Spaniard."

"That's a large price, for Clotilde is very plain," said Madame de Nucingen, who gave herself the airs of calling Mademoiselle de Grandlieu by her Christian name, as if she, *née* Goriot, frequented that society.

"No," remarked du Tillet, "the daughter of a duchess is never plain to such men as we, above all when she gives us the title of marquis and a diplomatic post."

"I am no longer surprised at Lucien's gravity," said de Marsay. "Most likely he has n't a sou, and does n't know how to get out of his position."

"But Mademoiselle de Grandlieu adores him," said the Comtesse de Montcornet, "and, by her influence, he may be able to make better conditions."

"What will he do with that sister and brother-in-law in Angoulême?" asked the Chevalier d'Espard.

"The sister is rich," answered Rastignac, "and he calls her now Madame Séchard de Marsac."

"Well, even if there are difficulties in his way, he's a handsome fellow," said Bianchon, rising to bow to the young man.

"Good-evening, dear friend," said Rastignac, exchanging a warm shake of the hand with Lucien.

De Marsay bowed coldly, after Lucien had bowed to him.

Before dinner, Desplein and Bianchon took notice of the evident illness of the Baron de Nucingen, perceiving however that the cause was mental. Bianchon declared, impossible as it seemed that this statesman of the Bourse should be in love, that the root of the

trouble lay there. After dinner, when the company dispersed about the garden, the intimates of the house surrounded the banker, endeavoring to clear up the mystery as soon as Bianchon had broached his theory.

"Do you know, baron," said de Marsay, "that you are losing flesh rapidly; and people suspect you of violating the laws of financial nature?"

"Never!" said the baron.

"Yes, they do," returned de Marsay. "They say you are in love."

"That is true," said Nucingen, piteously. "I sigh for an unknown object."

"You in love! you!" cried the Chevalier d'Espard. "What fatuity!"

"I know that nothing was ever more ridiculous than to be in love at my age," said the baron, in his ludicrous German accent. "But I can't help it, the thing is done."

"Is it a woman in society?" asked Lucien.

"Of course," said de Marsay, "the baron would n't get so thin except for a hopeless love; he has money enough to buy up all the women who could or would sell themselves."

"I don't know who she is," said Nucingen. "I can tell you one thing, — because Madame de Nucingen is in the salon, — I have never known till now what love is. It is enough to make me lose flesh."

"Where did you see her?" asked Rastignac.

"In a carriage, at midnight, in the Bois de Vincennes."

"Describe her," said de Marsay.

"A bodice of white gauze, a rose-colored gown, a

white scarf, white veil, — a figure truly biblical! eyes of fire, an Eastern skin — "

"You dreamed it," said Lucien, laughing.

"It is true I was sleeping like a — "

"Was she alone?" asked du Tillet, interrupting the banker's sentence.

"Yes," said the baron, in a dolorous tone, "except for a *chasseur* behind the carriage, and a waiting-maid."

"Lucien looks as if he knew her," cried Rastignac, detecting a smile on the young man's face.

"Who would n't know the sort of woman likely to go at midnight to meet Nucingen?" retorted Lucien, turning on his heel.

"She can hardly be any one in society, or the baron would have recognized the *chasseur*," remarked the Chevalier d'Espard.

"I never saw him before," said the baron; "I have had the police looking for her for the last forty days, and all to no purpose."

"She had better cost you a few hundred thousand francs than your life," said Desplein. "At your age a passion without nourishment is dangerous; it may cost you your life."

"Yes," replied Nucingen, "what I eat does n't nourish me; the air seems deadly. I go every day to the Bois de Vincennes to see the spot where I saw her. I can't attend to my affairs; if I paid a million to find her I should save money, for I can't do anything on the Bourse — ask du Tillet."

"True," responded du Tillet. "He has taken a disgust for business; a sign of death in a man like him."

"Sign of love," said Nucingen, "and to me they are the same thing."

The *naïveté* of the old man, no longer a lynx, but for the first time in his life conscious that there was something more precious and sacred than gold, touched these *blasés* minds; some exchanged smiles, but most of them looked at Nucingen with one thought expressed on their faces, "So strong a man to come to this!"

From the baron's description Lucien had, of course, recognized Esther. Greatly annoyed at his smile being noticed, he took advantage of the talk becoming general, while coffee was served, to disappear.

"What has become of Monsieur de Rubempré?" asked Madame de Nucingen.

"He is faithful to the motto of his family, *Quid me continebit?*" replied Rastignac.

"Which means either, 'Who can hold me?' or, 'I am unconquerable,' whichever you please," said de Marsay.

Like all despairing patients, the baron snatched at anything that seemed like hope; and he resolved to have Lucien watched by other spies than those of Louchard, the ablest man on the commercial police of Paris, with whom he had been in communication for the last fortnight on the matter of his mysterious woman.

Lucien, before paying his usual visit to Esther, intended to spend at the hôtel de Grandlieu the two hours which made Mademoiselle Clotilde-Frédérique de Grandlieu the happiest girl in the faubourg Saint-Germain. The prudence which now characterized the conduct of this ambitious young man counselled him

to inform Carlos Herrera immediately of the effect produced by the smile which had been forced from him on hearing Esther's portrait made by the Baron de Nucingen. The baron's infatuation for Esther, and his idea of putting the police upon her traces, were events of enough importance to communicate without loss of time to a man who had sought in a priest's cassock the shelter that criminals formerly found in the churches. From the rue Saint-Lazare, where the Nucingens lived, to the rue Saint-Dominique, in which is the hôtel de Grandlieu, Lucien's way led him past his own house on the quai Malaquais. He found the abbé smoking his breviary, that is to say, coloring a pipe, before he went to bed. This strangest of men had ended by renouncing Spanish cigars, finding them by no means strong enough.

"This is getting serious," said the abbé, when Lucien had told him all. "If the baron employs Louchard to get upon the girl's traces, he will certainly have the sense to put a spy upon yours, and all will be discovered. I have barely time to-night and to-morrow morning to shuffle the cards for the game I shall play against the baron, whom I must, before all else, convince of the impotence of the police. When that old lynx has lost all hope of finding the lamb, I'll sell her for what she is worth to him."

"Sell Esther!" cried Lucien, whose first impulses were always right.

"You forget our present position," said the abbé.

Lucien's head dropped.

"No money," continued the sham priest, "and sixty thousand francs of debt to pay! If you wish

to marry Clotilde de Grandlieu, you must buy a property worth a million to secure a dowry to that ugly creature. Esther is a game on which I will set the lynx in such a way as to get the million out of him. That 's my business."

"Esther will never — "

"It is my business, I tell you."

"She 'll die of it."

"Then it will be the business of the Pompes Funèbres. Besides, what else is there to do?" asked the savage brute, cutting short Lucien's elegies by the attitude he took. "How many generals died in the flower of their age for the Emperor Napoleon?" he asked, presently, after a moment's silence. "Women can always be had. In 1821 you thought no one could be like Coralie; but you found Esther. After Esther will come — do you know who? The unknown woman! she who, of all women, is the most beautiful; and you can look for her in the German capital, where the son-in-law of the Duc de Grandlieu will represent the King of France. Besides, please to tell me, baby that you are, how you know that Esther will die of it. Let me act; you need not think of anything. The matter is mine; it concerns me, — only, you must give up Esther for a week or two. Now, go and warble to your Grandlieu; I must be stirring at once. You will find Esther rather sad when you see her; but tell her to obey me. Our cloak of virtue, our mantle of innocence — the screens behind which all great men hide their iniquities — are in danger; and the danger threatens my glorious I, — you, who must never be suspected. Chance has served us better than my own thoughts,

which, for two months, have revolved about this point."

Casting forth these terrible sentences one by one, like pistol-shots, the false priest hastily dressed himself, and prepared to go out.

"Your joy is visible!" cried Lucien. "You have never liked poor Esther, and you are only too happy that the moment has come to get rid of her."

"You have never ceased to love her, have you? Well, I've never ceased to execrate her. But she served my purpose, and I have always acted as though I loved the girl, though I held her life, through Asia, in my hands. A few mistaken mushrooms in a stew, and all was over. Yet Mademoiselle Esther lives. She is happy because you love her! Don't play the baby now. It is four years that we have watched and waited for a turn of luck for or against us. Well, then, let us display something more than talent in peeling the fruit that the hand of fate has this day flung to us. In this throw of the dice there is, as there is in everything, something good and something bad. Do you know what I was thinking of as you came in?"

"No."

"Of making myself here, as I did at Barcelona with Asia's help, the heir of a bigoted old woman."

"A crime?"

"There was no other resource that I could see to secure your future. Our creditors are getting restless. Once pursued by duns and bailiffs and driven from the hôtel de Grandlieu, what would become of you? Your note to the devil was due."

And the false priest described by a gesture the

suicide of a man who flings himself into the water. Then he turned on Lucien one of those fixed and penetrating looks by which the will of strong men enter the souls of feeble ones. This look, which held the young man spell-bound and had the effect of relaxing all resistance, showed that there existed between Lucien and the false abbé not only certain secrets of life and death, but also sentiments paramount to all ordinary sentiments, as was the man himself to the baseness of his position.

Compelled to live an alien to social life, into which the laws forbade him ever to return, exhausted by desperate and terrible resistances, but endowed with a force of soul which preyed upon him, this man, at once ignoble and grand, obscure yet famous, consumed, above all, by the fever of life, lived again in the elegant person of Lucien, whose soul had become his soul. He had made himself represented in the social life to which he could never return by this poet, to whom he gave his own tenacity and his iron will. To him, Lucien was more than a son, more than a beloved woman, more than family, more than life, — he was his Vengeance; and, inasmuch as strong souls care far more for a sentiment than for life itself, he had attached Lucien to him by indissoluble bonds. Having bought the life of the despairing poet on the verge of suicide, he proposed to him one of those infernal compacts which are supposed to exist only in the pages of a novel, but the possibility of which, as a matter of fact, is frequently shown in the police courts by celebrated legal dramas. In bestowing upon Lucien all the joys and pleasures of Parisian life, in

proving to him that he could once more create for himself a splendid future, he had made the young man a thing of his own. No sacrifice whatever cost this strange man anything, so long as it concerned his second self. In spite of his own vast strength, he was so feeble against the fancies of his creature that he had ended by confiding to him his secrets. Perhaps this purely mental participation in crime was a bond the more between them. From the day when la Torpille was spirited away, Lucien knew the horrible foundations on which his prosperity was based. The cassock of the Spanish priest hid Jacques Collin, a celebrity of the galleys, who, ten years earlier, had lived, under the vulgar name of Vautrin, in the Pension Vauquer, where Rastignac and Bianchon were also living. (See "Père Goriot.")

Jacques Collin, also called "Trompe-la-Mort," who escaped from the galleys at Rochefort almost as soon as he was returned there, had profited by the example of the famous Comte de Sainte-Hélène, modifying however, the more vicious part of Coignard's bold action. To substitute himself for an honest man and continue, as he must, the life of an escaped galley-slave, was a scheme with two lines so antagonistic that it could scarcely fail to come to some fatal end, in Paris especially; for, by transplanting himself into a family a criminal increased, tenfold, the dangers of detection. To protect himself from inquiry it was necessary to go outside or above the ordinary round of life. A man in society is subject to certain risks which never touch the man who has no contact with it. For this reason the cassock is the safest of

all disguises, when it can be carried out by an exemplary, solitary life, devoid of action. "Therefore, I will be a priest," said this socially dead man, who willed to live again under a social form and satisfy passions for power and for existence as strange as the being himself.

The civil war which the constitution of 1812 produced in Spain, where this resolute man betook himself after his escape from the galleys, gave him the means of secretly killing the real Carlos Herrera on the high-road from an ambush. This priest, who was the bastard of a grandee, abandoned by his father and ignorant of his mother, was charged with a political mission to France by King Ferdinand VII., to whom a bishop had recommended him. The bishop, the sole man who took an interest in Carlos Herrera, died during the journey which this forlorn hope of the Church was making from Cadiz to Madrid, and from Madrid to Paris. Fortunate in meeting so desired an individual under circumstances that exactly suited him, Jacques Collin wounded his own back to efface the fatal letters of the galleys and changed his skin with acids. In thus transforming himself in presence of the priest's body before destroying it, he was able to give himself a certain likeness to his double; and to complete this transmutation (which was nearly as marvellous as that in the Arabian tale where the dervish acquires the power of entering — he, an old man — into a young body by the use of magic words) the galley-slave, who could speak Spanish, taught himself as much Latin as a Spanish priest might be expected to know.

Collin had been chosen the banker of the galleys,

and he was rich with deposits confided to his well-known honesty, — an honesty which was also a matter of necessity, for among such partners an error is balanced by a dagger. To these funds he added the money given by the bishop to Carlos Herrera. Before leaving Spain he was able to lay hands on the wealth of a pious old lady in Barcelona, to whom he gave absolution on her death-bed and a promise to restore certain sums derived by her from a crime, through which her fortune came to her.

Having become a priest, charged with a secret mission which would naturally obtain for him powerful supporters in Paris, Jacques Collin, firmly resolving to do nothing that might compromise the character he had now assumed, had given himself up to the chances of his new career at the moment when he encountered Lucien on the high-road from Angoulême to Paris. The young man seemed to the false abbé a marvellous instrument of power placed unexpectedly in his hand. He saved the suicide from himself, saying: —

"Give yourself into the hands of a man of God as some men give themselves to the devil, and you shall have every chance for a new existence. You shall live as in a dream, from which the worst awaking can be no worse than the death you are about to seek."

The alliance of these two beings, who became as it were one, rested on this argument, full of force, which the abbé clinched still further by slowly and sagaciously leading up to complete collusion. Gifted with the genius of corruption, he destroyed Lucien's conscience by plunging him into cruel difficulties, from which he extricated him by obtaining his tacit consent

to wicked or infamous actions, which, he was careful to show, left Lucien pure and loyal in the eyes of others. Lucien was to be a social splendor, in the shadow of which the spurious abbé wished to live.

"I am the author, you shall be the drama; if you do not succeed, it is I who will be hissed," he said to Lucien the day that he revealed to him his sacrilegious disguise.

The false priest went cautiously from avowal to avowal, measuring the infamy of his confidences by Lucien's needs and the progress made in corrupting him. Trompe-la-Mort did not, however, make his final disclosure until the moment when the habit of Parisian enjoyments, success, and satisfied vanity had enslaved both body and soul of the feeble poet. Where, in the olden time, Rastignac, tempted by this devil, had resisted, Lucien succumbed, being better manœuvred, more judiciously compromised, vanquished, above all, by the happiness of having conquered an enviable position. EVIL, which the poetic imagination calls Satan or the Devil, employed upon this man, half a woman, its most alluring seductions, asking little of him at first, and giving much. The great argument of the abbé was the same eternal secrecy promised by Tartuffe to Elmire. The reiterated proofs of an absolute devotion, like that of Saïd to Mohammed, completed the horrible work of Lucien's conquest by Jacques Collin.

At the moment of which we write, the money spent on Lucien and Esther had used up the funds confided to the honesty of the banker of the galleys, who was now exposed to a terrible settling of accounts; and.

more than that, they had incurred heavy debts. At this moment, when Lucien was about to attain complete success, the mere rolling of a pebble beneath their feet might bring down the illusive edifice of a fortune so audaciously built up. At the masked ball, Rastignac had recognized Vautrin, the Vautrin of the Pension Vauquer; but he knew he was a dead man in case of indiscretion, and the looks exchanged between him and Lucien hid fear on both sides beneath a semblance of friendship. It was certain that if a critical moment came, Rastignac would with joy call up the cart to take Jacques Collin to the scaffold.

Every one can now understand the savage joy with which the false priest welcomed the news of Nucingen's sudden passion, seizing in a single thought the extrication a man of his kind could derive by the sacrifice of poor Esther.

"No matter," he said to Lucien, "the devil protects his almoner."

"You are smoking on a powder-cask."

"*Incedo per ignes!*" replied the false priest, laughing; "it is my business."

## VII.

### THE HÔTEL DE GRANDLIEU.

THE house of Grandlieu became divided into two branches about the middle of the last century. First, the ducal house, now doomed to extinction, because the present duke has only daughters; secondly, the Vicomtes de Grandlieu, who bear the title and arms of the elder branch. The ducal branch bear gules, three battle-axes or, placed in fesse, with the famous *Caveo non Timeo* for motto, which tells the whole history of the house. The arms of the vicomtes are quartered with those of the Navarreins, who bear gules, a fesse crenellated or, surmounted by a knight's helmet for crest, and the motto, *Grands faits, Grand lieu.* The present vicomtesse, a widow since 1813, has a son and one daughter. Though she returned from the emigration half-ruined as to property, she recovered, thanks to the devotion of a lawyer, Derville, quite a handsome fortune.

The Duc and Duchesse de Grandlieu, who returned in 1804, were the object of much blandishment on the part of the Emperor. Napoleon, who invited them to court, returned everything that could be found belonging to the house of Grandlieu in the National domain, amounting to a revenue of nearly forty thousand francs a year. Of all the great seigneurs of the faubourg Saint-Germain who allowed themselves to be cajoled

by Napoleon, the duke and duchess (an Ajuda of the elder branch, allied to the Braganzas) were the only ones who did not repudiate the Emperor or forget his benefits. Louis XVIII. respected this fidelity when the faubourg Saint-Germain considered it a crime; but in so doing perhaps the King only meant to annoy MONSIEUR.

It was thought probable that the young Vicomte de Grandlieu would marry Marie-Athénaïs, the youngest daughter of the duke, now nine years old. Sabine, the youngest but one, married the Baron de Guénic after the revolution of July. Joséphine, the third, became Madame d'Ajuda-Pinto when the marquis lost his first wife, Mademoiselle Rochefide (*alias* Rochegude). The eldest daughter had taken the veil in 1822. The second, Mademoiselle Clotilde-Frédérique, now twenty-seven years of age, was deeply in love with Lucien de Rubempré. It is unnecessary to ask if the hôtel de Grandlieu, one of the finest in the rue Saint-Dominique, exercised a powerful fascination over Lucien's mind. Every time the great gates turned on their hinges to admit his cabriolet to the court-yard he experienced the satisfaction described by Mirabeau: —

"Though my father was only an apothecary at Angoulême, I am here —"

Such was his constant thought; and he would willingly have committed other crimes than his alliance with Jacques Collin to keep the right of walking up the steps of that portico and hearing his name announced — Monsieur de Rubempré! — in the grand salon of the style of Louis XIV., built on the model of those at Versailles, where was assembled that society of the

élite, the cream of Paris, which went at that time by the name of "le petit château." The duchess, one of those women who dislike leaving their own homes, was generally surrounded by her neighbors, the Chaulieus, the Navarreins, and the Lenoncourts. Often the pretty Baronne de Macumer (*née* Chaulieu), the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, Madame d'Espard, Madame de Camps, Mademoiselle des Touches (connected with the Grandlieus who come from Bretagne), were there for a while before going to a ball or after the opera. The Vicomte de Grandlieu, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Prince de Blamont-Chauvry, the Marquis de Beauséant, the Vidame de Pamiers, the two Vandernesses, the old Prince de Cadignan, and his son the Duc de Maufrigneuse were the *habitués* of this grandiose salon, where the atmosphere was that of a court, and the manners, tone, and wit harmonized with the noble presence of the masters, whose grand aristocratic bearing caused their Napoleonic servitude to be forgotten.

The old Duchesse d'Uxelles, mother of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, was the oracle of this coterie, where Madame de Sérizy had never yet been able to obtain admittance, though born a Ronquerolles. Lucien, brought there by Madame de Maufrigneuse, who had made her mother act in the matter, maintained his position, thanks to the influence of the Grand Almonry of France and the help of the archbishop of Paris. But even so, he was not presented until after the King's ordinance had restored to him the name and arms of the house of Rubempré. The Duc de Rhétoré, the Chevalier d'Espard, and a few others, jealous of Lucien, did their best from time to time to prejudice

the Duc de Grandlieu against him, by relating anecdotes concerning Lucien's antecedents; but the pious duchess, surrounded by the magnates of the Church, and Clotilde de Grandlieu supported him. Lucien explained this enmity by alluding to his affair with the cousin of Madame d'Espard, Madame de Bargeton, now Comtesse du Châtelet. Then, feeling the necessity of being admitted on terms of intimacy by so powerful a family, and prompted by his desire to win Clotilde, Lucien had the courage of *parvenus;* he called there five days out of seven every week; he swallowed all indignities with a good grace, bore with impertinent glances, and answered slighting speeches with ready wit. His assiduity, the charm of his manners, and his apparent good-humor ended by neutralizing objections and lessening obstacles. Received by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, Madame de Sérizy, and Mademoiselle des Touches, Lucien, satisfied with admission to four such houses, learned from the abbé to put the greatest reserve and discretion into all his relations with them.

"No one can devote himself to many houses at a time," said his private counsellor. "He who goes everywhere, never excites a real interest anywhere. Great people only protect those who frequent them, those they see every day; individuals who manage to make themselves necessary to them, like the sofas on which they sit."

Accustomed to consider the salon of the Grandlieus as his battlefield, Lucien reserved his wit, his clever sayings, and the courtier graces which characterized him for the hours that he spent there. Insinuating, caressing, and warned by Clotilde of the rocks around

him, he flattered the little foibles of the Duc de Grandlieu. Clotilde, who began by being jealous of Madame de Maufrigneuse, was now desperately in love with Lucien. Knowing well the advantages of such a marriage, Lucien played his rôle as a lover with all the charm of Armand, the new *jeune premier* of the Comédie-Française. He went to mass every Sunday at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin; he appeared in the character of an ardent Catholic; he delivered himself of religious and monarchical precepts which did marvels for him. Moreover, he wrote quite remarkable articles in the journals devoted to the Congrégation without being willing to take money for them, or to put any signature but L. He also wrote political pamphlets required by the King or the Grand Almonry without asking the slightest recompense.

"The King," he said, "has already done so much for me that I owe him my very blood."

So, within a few days, it had been proposed to appoint Lucien as private secretary to the prime-minister; but Madame d'Espard hearing of this, put so many persons at work against Lucien that the Maître Jacques of Charles X. hesitated to take the step. Not only was Lucien's position scarcely defined enough as yet, but the question "What does he live on?" which came more and more to the surface as he raised himself in society, demanded an answer; and benevolent curiosity as well as malicious curiosity, beginning to investigate, found more than one flaw in his armor. Clotilde de Grandlieu served her father and mother as an innocent spy. A few days earlier she had taken Lucien aside into the recess of a window, and had there told him of the family objections.

"Obtain an estate worth a million and you may have my hand; that is my mother's answer," said Clotilde.

"They 'll ask you later where the money comes from," said the abbé, when Lucien reported to him Clotilde's speech.

"My brother-in-law, David Séchard, must have made his fortune by this time," said Lucien. "I 'll take him for my responsible editor."

"Then nothing is wanting to your triumph but that million," the abbé cried. "I must think about getting it."

To explain Lucien's exact position at the hôtel de Grandlieu, it must be told that he had never dined there. Neither Clotilde nor the Duchesse d'Uxelles, nor Madame de Maufrigneuse, who always continued a good friend to Lucien, could persuade the old duke to grant them that favor, for he persisted in distrusting the man whom he called the "Sieur de Rubempré." This cloud, noticed by all who frequented the salon, was sharply wounding to Lucien's self-love; he felt he was only tolerated there after all. The world is right to be exacting, for it is often deceived. To cut a figure in Paris without known means, without an acknowledged profession, is a position which no scheming can long maintain. Therefore Lucien, in raising himself socially gave additional strength to the objection, "What does he live on?" He had been forced into saying at the house of Madame de Sérizy, — to whom he owed the support of the attorney-general Granville, and of a minister of State, Comte Octave de Bauvan, — "I am dreadfully in debt."

As he now entered the court-yard of the hôtel where

lay the hope and triumph of all his vanities, he said to himself, bitterly, thinking of Trompe-la-Mort's words, "I hear the whole thing cracking under my feet."

He loved Esther, but he wanted Mademoiselle de Grandlieu for his wife. Strange situation, — he must sell one to obtain the other! Only one man could make that traffic without his own honor suffering; that man was Jacques Collin. Ought they not, therefore, to be as cautious and silent one toward the other as one for the other?

Life does not offer two compacts of this nature in which a man is alternately the master and the slave. Reaching the hôtel de Grandlieu, Lucien shook off the clouds that darkened his brow, and entered the *salon* gay and radiant.

At this moment the windows were open, the fragrance from the garden perfumed the room, the plant-stand, which occupied the centre of it, was a pyramid of bloom. The duchess, seated on a sofa in a corner, was talking with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Several women made a group around her, remarkable for divers attitudes conveying the expressions which each gave to simulated grief. In society no one is really interested in misfortunes or suffering; sentiments are mere words. The men were walking about the *salon* or in the garden. Clotilde and Joséphine were sitting at the tea-table. The Vidame de Pamiers, the Duc de Grandlieu, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, and the Duc de Maufrigneuse were playing *wisk* (*sic*) in a corner.

When Lucien was announced, he crossed the *salon* and bowed to the duchess, asking her the cause of the affliction expressed upon her face.

"Madame de Chaulieu has received some dreadful news. Her son-in-law, the Baron de Macumer, ex-Duc de Soria, has just died. The young Duc de Soria and his wife, who had gone to Chantepleurs to be with him, have written the sad news. Louise is in a heart-rending state."

"A woman is not loved twice in her life as Louise was by him," said Madeline de Mortsauf.

"She will be a rich widow," remarked the old Duchesse d'Uxelles, with a glance at Lucien, whose face continued impassible.

"Poor Louise!" exclaimed Madame d'Espard. "I understand her, and I pity her."

The Marquise d'Espard, as she said these words, had the thoughtful look of a woman full of heart and soul. Though Sabine de Grandlieu was only ten years old, she looked at her mother with an intelligent eye, the almost mocking expression of which was reproved by a glance from the duchess. This is what is called "bringing up your children well."

"If my daughter survives this blow," said Madame de Chaulieu, with a most maternal air, "her future will make me very uneasy. Louise is too romantic."

"I am sure I don't know," said the Duchesse d'Uxelles, "from whom our daughters get that characteristic."

"It is difficult in these days," said an old cardinal, "to make the demands of the heart and the conventions of society agree."

Lucien, who had nothing to say on this topic, went to the tea-table to pay his respects to the Demoiselles de Grandlieu. When the poet was at sufficient dis-

tance from the group of women, the Marquise d'Espard leaned forward to the ear of the Duchesse de Grandlieu.

"Then you really think that man is very much in love with your dear Clotilde?" she said.

The perfidy of this question can only be understood after reading a sketch of Clotilde. This young lady, about twenty-seven years of age, was then standing up; an attitude which allowed the sarcastic glance of the Marquise d'Espard to observe the whole of her lank, lean form, which somewhat resembled that of asparagus. Her bust was so flat that it did not allow of those colonial resources which dressmakers call *fichus menteurs.* In fact Clotilde, who knew the all-sufficing advantages of her name and rank, so far from being at the pains to disguise this defect, heroically allowed it to be fully perceptible. By wearing her gowns made tight and plain, she conveyed the effect of those stiff, rigid forms which the sculptors of the middle-ages placed in the niches of the cathedrals. Clotilde was four feet five inches in height. If it is permissible to make use of a familiar expression, which has the merit of being easily understood, she was all legs. This fault of proportion gave the upper part of her body the effect of being slightly deformed. A brunette in complexion, with wiry black hair, very thick eyebrows, ardent eyes revolving in orbits that were already charring, the face arched at the top of the prominent forehead like the moon in its first quarter, she presented a curious caricature of her mother, who had been one of the handsomest women in Portugal. Nature seems to take delight in such freaks.

We often see in families a sister of surprising beauty, while the same cast of feature in a brother will be absolute ugliness, although they may strongly resemble each other. Clotilde's mouth, which was very much drawn in, had a stereotyped expression of disdain. Her lips betrayed, more than any other feature of her face, the secret movements of her heart; affection gave them at times a delightful expression, all the more remarkable because her cheeks, too brown to blush, and her black, hard eyes said nothing. In spite of all these disadvantages, in spite of her plank-like rigidity, she derived from her race and her education an air of grandeur, a lofty countenance, and the nameless something, well-called the *je ne sais quoi* (due, perhaps, to the frankness of her gown), which marked her as the daughter of a noble house. She made the most of her hair, which in length and vigor might have been called a beauty. Her voice, which she had cultivated, was charming, and she sang delightfully.

"Why should n't he be in love with my poor Clotilde?" replied the duchess. "Do you know what she said yesterday? 'If I am loved for ambition, I will take care that I am loved for myself as well.' She is witty and ambitious; there are many men to whom those qualities are pleasing. As for that young man, my dear, he is as beautiful as a dream; and if he can buy back the Rubempré estate, the King will restore to him, for our sakes, the title of marquis. After all, his mother was the last Rubempré."

"Poor fellow, where will he get the million?" said the marquise.

"That's not our affair," returned the duchess, laughing; "but he certainly will not steal it. You may be sure we shall not give Clotilde to an adventurer, or a dishonest man, were he as beautiful, poetical, and charming as Monsieur de Rubempré."

"You are late," said Clotilde, smiling at Lucien with infinite grace.

"Yes, I dined out."

"You go a great deal into society of late," she said, concealing her jealousy and her anxiety beneath a smile.

"Society!" exclaimed Lucien. "No, I have only by mere chance dined all the week with bankers; to-day with Nucingen, yesterday with du Tillet, the day before with the Hellers."

Observe that Lucien had learned to take the supercilious tone of *grands seigneurs*.

"You have many enemies," said Clotilde, offering him a cup of tea. "Some one has told my father that you have sixty thousand francs of debt, and that before long you will be in Sainte-Pélagie. If you knew what these calumnies cost me! The blame all falls on me. I will not speak to you of what I suffer (my father gives me looks which torture me), but of what you must suffer if there is any truth at all in such a rumor."

"Don't trouble yourself about such nonsense; love me as I love you, and trust me for a few weeks longer," said Lucien, setting down his empty cup on the silver salver.

"Pray do not speak to my father to-night, or he may answer you with some impertinence which you

will be unable to bear, and then we are lost. That malicious Marquise d'Espard told him that your mother nursed women in childbirth and that your sister was a washerwoman."

"We were in the deepest poverty," replied Lucien, the tears rushing to his eyes. "That was not calumny, only ill-natured gossip. To-day my sister is more than a millionnaire; my mother died two years ago. Spiteful persons have withheld this information until I was on the point of succeeding here."

"But what have you done to Madame d'Espard?"

"I had the imprudence to relate at Madame de Sérizy's, before Monsieur de Granville, the story of the suit she brought against her husband to obtain the injunction, the facts of which had been confided to me by Bianchon. Monsieur de Granville's opinion changed that of the Keeper of the Seals. They both drew back, fearing the 'Gazette des Tribunaux' and the scandal, and the marquise was rapped over the knuckles in the verdict which put an end to that dreadful business. Though Monsieur de Sérizy committed an indiscretion which made the marquise my mortal enemy, I, at any rate, gained his protection, and that of the attorney-general, and also that of Comte Octave de Bauvan, to whom Madame de Sérizy told the peril in which they had put me by revealing the source of their information. Monsieur le Marquis d'Espard had the want of tact to pay me a visit of acknowledgment, as the cause of his triumph in that infamous suit."

"I will deliver you from Madame d'Espard," said Clotilde.

"Ah! and how?" cried Lucien.

"My mother shall invite the little d'Espards here; they are charming and nearly grown up. The father and the sons will sing your praises, and then we are certain not to see the mother."

"Oh! Clotilde, you are adorable, and if I did not love you for yourself, I should love you for your wit and sense."

"It is neither wit nor sense," she said, putting all her love upon her lips. "Adieu; don't return here for several days. When you see me at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin wearing a pink scarf you will know that my father has changed his tone."

The young lady seemed from this speech to be more than twenty-seven years of age.

Lucien took a hackney-coach at the rue de la Planche, left it on the boulevards, took another near the Madeleine and told the man to drive into the court-yard in the rue Taitbout. He entered Esther's room at eleven o'clock and found her in tears, but dressed as if she wished to make a festival of his coming. When the door opened, she wiped away her tears and sprang forward to Lucien, wrapping her arms about him as a silken tissue caught up by the wind winds itself round a tree.

"Parted!" she cried. "Is it true?"

"Pooh! only for a few days," replied Lucien.

Esther released him from her arms and fell back upon the sofa as if dead. She said not a word; she lay with her face pressed into the cushions, weeping hot tears. Lucien tried to raise and soothe her.

"My child, we are not separated. What! after five years of happiness is this how you take a little absence?

Ah!" thought he, remembering Coralie; "how is it that these women love me so?"

The senses have their *beau idéal.* When to so much beauty is added sweetness of nature and the poetic charm which distinguished Lucien, we can conceive the fond passion of these poor women, so sensitive to external natural gifts and so naïve in their admiration.

Esther sobbed gently, and lay without moving in an attitude of the deepest sorrow.

"But, my child," said Lucien, "did he not tell you that it concerns my very life?"

At these words, said intentionally by Lucien, Esther sprang up, like some wild animal; her hair, which had fallen loose, surrounded her beautiful face like foliage. She looked at Lucien with a fixed eye.

"Your life!" she cried, raising her arms and letting them fall again, with a gesture which belongs only to a woman in danger. "True; that savage wrote it."

She drew a paper from her belt.

"See," she said, "this is what *he* wrote," giving Lucien a letter which the abbé had sent to her. Lucien read it aloud: —

"You will leave Paris to-morrow, at five in the morning. A carriage will be sent to take you to a house in the forest of Saint-Germain. There you will have an apartment on the first floor. Do not leave it until I permit you. You will want for nothing. The keeper of the house and his wife are trustworthy. Do not write to Lucien. Keep the carriage blinds down as you drive there. This matter concerns Lucien's life.

"Lucien will see you to-night to say farewell; burn this letter in his presence."

Lucien instantly burned the letter at the flame of a candle.

"Hear me, my Lucien," said Esther, having listened to the reading of the note as a criminal listens to his sentence of death. "I will not tell you that I love you; it would be silly to do so. It is now five years that to love you has seemed to me as natural as to breathe, or live. Since that first day when my happiness began, under the protection of that inexplicable being who put me here like some curious little animal in a cage, I knew that you would marry. Marriage is necessary to your destiny, and God keep me from hindering the development of your career. This marriage is death to me; but I will not harass you; I shall not do as the grisettes, who smother themselves with pans of charcoal, — once was enough for that. No, I shall go far away, out of France. I only ask one thing, my angel, my adored; it is that you will not deceive me. I have had my share of life; since the day I first saw you in 1824 until to-day, I have had more happiness than there is in ten lives of other happy women. Therefore, judge me for what I am, — a woman both strong and weak. Say to me, 'I am to marry;' I will ask you only for a tender, a very tender farewell, and you shall never hear of me again."

There was a moment's silence after these words, the sincerity of which was deepened by tones and gesture.

"Does it concern your marriage?" she asked, plunging her compelling eyes, brilliant as the blade of a dagger, into the brilliant eyes of the man before her.

"For the last eighteen months we have certainly been working for my marriage, but it is not arranged," replied Lucien, "and I do not know when it will be. But that is not the present matter, my dear child, which concerns the abbé and me and you. We are threatened with a great danger, — Nucingen has seen you."

"Yes, I know," she said, — "at Vincennes. Did he recognize me?"

"No," said Lucien, "but he has fallen frantically in love with you. After dinner, when he described you, I let a smile escape me, — an involuntary and most imprudent smile; for I live in the midst of social life like a savage, perpetually in fear of the traps of enemies. The abbé, who takes the burden of thinking from me, considers the situation dangerous; he takes upon himself to baffle Nucingen if Nucingen attempts to spy upon us; and the baron is quite capable of that. He said something to-night about the stupidity of the police. You have set on fire a chimney full of soot."

"What does the abbé mean to do?" asked Esther, very gently.

"I don't know; he told me to keep quiet, and see nothing of Esther."

"If that is so, I obey with the submission that is my pride," she said, passing her arm through that of Lucien and leading him to her room. "Did you have a good dinner, my Lulu, with your infamous Nucingen?"

"Asia's cooking prevents one from thinking any dinner good, however famous the cook may be; but Carême sent up the usual Sunday dinner."

Lucien involuntarily compared Esther with Clotilde. The first was so beautiful, so constantly charming, that the monster of satiety had never once approached him.

"What a pity," he said to himself, "to be forced to have one's wife in two volumes! Here, poetry, pleasure, love, devotion, beauty, charm; there, noble blood, race, honors, rank, and knowledge of the world. And no way of uniting them in a single person!"

The next day when he woke, at seven in the morning, in that charming room, all white and rose, the poet was alone. When he rang, Europe came in.

"Where is your mistress?"

"Madame left the house at a quarter to five, according to the orders of Monsieur l'abbé, who sent a carriage."

## VIII.

### FALSE NOTES, FALSE DEBTS, AND A CRAVEN HEART.

THE day after Esther was removed to Saint-Germain, the terrible and inexplicable man, who weighed upon her heart and ruled her fate, came to her with three stamped papers, which he requested her to sign, bearing the words, on the first, "Accepted for sixty thousand francs;" on the second, "Accepted for one hundred and twenty thousand francs;" on the third, "Accepted for one hundred and twenty thousand francs." In all, three hundred thousand francs. When the words "good for" are used, a simple note is drawn; but the word "accepted" constitutes a bill of exchange, which, if unmet, subjects the drawer to arrest. That single word makes a person who ignorantly or imprudently signs it liable to five years' imprisonment,— a penalty seldom inflicted in the correctional police courts, and which the court of assizes only inflicts on criminals. The law as to imprisonment for debt is a relic of barbarism, which adds to its stupidity the merit of being useless, for it never touches real swindlers.

"The object is," said the former galley-slave, "to extricate Lucien from his embarrassments. We have sixty thousand francs of debt hanging over us; but with these three hundred thousand francs he can clear himself and start again."

After antedating the bills of exchange by six months, the abbé made them drawn on Esther by a man who never fell into the hands of the police of Paris, and whose adventures, in spite of the noise they made, were speedily forgotten, lost, and covered up by the racket of the great symphony of July, 1830.

This young man, one of the most audacious swindlers who ever lived, the son of a clerk at Boulogne, near Paris, was named Georges-Marie Destourny. The father, obliged to sell his clerkship for very little, died about 1824, and left his son without resources, after giving him that brilliant education for the world which the folly of the lesser bourgeoisie covets for their sons. At twenty-three, the young and brilliant pupil at the law-school had repudiated his father by printing his name on his cards as "Georges d'Estourny." This card gave him a fragrance of aristocracy. He became a frequenter of clubs, and acquired a groom and a tilbury. One word will explain all. He gambled at the Bourse with the money entrusted to him by courtesans, whose agent he was. He was finally in danger from the correctional police, and, when obliged to fly, neglected to pay up his "differences" at the Bourse. He had accomplices, — young men corrupted by him, his henchmen, and the sharers of his elegance and credit. When he fled, the Paris of the boulevards trembled. In the days of his splendor, Georges d'Estourny, handsome, good-natured, and generous as a robber-chief, had protected La Torpille for several months. The abbé based his speculation on this acquaintance.

Georges d'Estourny, whose ambition was emboldened

by success, had taken under his protection a man from the departments whom the liberal party wished to indemnify for an imprisonment bravely, it was said, incurred in the struggle of the press against the government of Charles X. The Sieur Cérizet, called the "courageous Cérizet," was pardoned. Now Cérizet, patronized for form's sake by the magnates of the Left, had opened a sort of agency, which combined banking, brokerage, and a commission business. Cérizet was very glad at that time to ally himself with Georges d'Estourny, who trained him. Esther, in virtue of the old story of Ninon, might very well be supposed to be the depositary of a part of d'Estourny's fortune. An endorsement by Georges d'Estourny made the abbé master of the notes he had created. The forgery was no risk if Esther, or some one on her behalf, paid the notes.

After obtaining full information as to Cérizet's business, Jacques Collin perceived that he was one of those obscure individuals who are determined to make their fortunes, but — legally. Cérizet, who was the real depositary of d'Estourny's gains, held for him as *locum tenens* certain important securities which were waiting for a rise at the Bourse, and which enabled Cérizet to call himself a banker. Such things are done every day in Paris. The man may be despised, but not his money. Jacques Collin now went to see Cérizet, intending to make use of him after his fashion; for he was, by a lucky chance, master of the secrets of this worthy associate of d'Estourny. The courageous Cérizet lived in an entresol in the rue du Gros-Chenet, and the abbé, having ordered the servant to announce him as coming from Monsieur d'Estourny, found the

so-called banker quite pale with fear at this announcement, and recognized at a glance, from the description given him by Lucien, the Judas of David Séchard.

"Can we talk here without danger of being overheard?" said the abbé, transformed, however, into an Englishman with red hair, blue spectacles, and as clean and neat as a puritan going to meeting.

"Why so, monsieur?" asked Cérizet. "Who are you?"

"Mr. William Barker, creditor of Monsieur d'Estourny. But I'll show you the necessity of closing the door if you desire it. We know, monsieur, what were your relations with Petit-Claud, the Cointets, and the Séchards at Angoulême."

At these words Cérizet jumped to the door and closed it, after which he went to the door of an inner room and bolted that. Then he said to the stranger: "Speak low, monsieur," adding, as he examined the false Englishman, "What do you want with me?"

"Well," said William Barker, "every man for himself in this world. You have the securities of that rascal d'Estourny in your hands — Oh! don't be afraid, I have not come to ask for them; but, pressed by me, that swindler, who, between ourselves, deserves the halter, has given me these notes which he thinks I may be able to get paid; and as I don't want to sue the person in my own name, he told me that you would let me use yours."

Cérizet looked at the letters of exchange.

"But he's no longer at Frankfort," he said.

"I know that," said Barker, "but he might have been at the date of these notes."

"I don't want to make myself responsible," said Cérizet.

"I don't ask for any such sacrifice; but you can be empowered to receive them. Receipt for them, and I will see that they are paid."

"I am surprised that d'Estourny should show so little confidence in me," remarked Cérizet.

"He knows a good deal," said the Englishman, significantly. "I don't blame him for not wishing to put all his eggs in one basket."

"Do you think—" began the little peddler in business, returning the letters of exchange duly acknowledged and signed.

"I think that you take good care of his funds," said the Englishman. "In fact I am sure of it; they are already staked on the green table of the Bourse."

"My interest is—"

"To lose them, ostensibly," said William Barker.

"Monsieur!" cried Cérizet.

"Look here, my dear Monsieur Cérizet," said Barker, coolly, interrupting the little man, "you can do me a service by facilitating this payment. Have the kindness to write me a letter in which you say you consign these notes to me, receipted for by you on d'Estourny's account, and add that the sheriff's officer is to consider the bearer of the letter as the owner of the three notes."

"Tell me your name."

"Never mind names," said Barker; "say 'the bearer of this letter and the three notes.' You shall be paid for this service."

"How?" asked Cérizet.

"With a word in your ear. You intend to remain in France, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well; Georges d'Estourny will never return here."

"Why not?"

"Because there are more than half a dozen persons who, to my knowledge, will kill him, and he knows it."

"Then I'm not surprised he has told me to send him an outfit for India," cried Cérizet. "He has unluckily compelled me to invest all his property in the Funds. We are already debtors for differences. I live from hand to mouth."

"Get out of the scrape yourself."

"Ah! if I had only known it earlier!" cried Cérizet. "I have missed a fortune."

"One word more," said Barker. "Prudence — you are capable of that — and (what I am not so sure about) fidelity! Adieu; we shall meet again, and I'll help you to make your fortune."

Having cast into that soul of mud a hope which might secure its prudence and fidelity for some little time, Barker went off to a sheriff's officer on whom he could rely, and ordered him to get the various judgments through the courts against Esther.

"The money will be paid," he said; "it is an affair of honor, and we want it done legally."

The sheriff's officer, thus instructed took the necessary steps, and being requested to act politely, put the various summons in an envelope and went himself to the rue Taitbout to seize the furniture; Europe received him. The preliminaries of the arrest for debt being thus laid, Esther was ostensibly under the sword of

some three hundred thousand francs of undeniable debt. Jacques Collin did not invent the situation. The vaudeville of false debts is often played in Paris. There are many sub-Gobsecks and sub-Gigonnets who, for a premium, will play the trick. Maxime de Trailles had sometimes made use of this means, and played new comedies to the old score. Carlos Herrera, however, who wished to save both the honor of his cloth and Lucien's honor, had recourse to a forgery without risk, though it is now so often practised that the law is beginning to interfere. There is, they say, a Bourse for false notes in the neighborhood of the Palais Royal, where for three francs any one can buy a signature.

Having thus laid his plans to secure three hundred thousand of the million necessary to the purchase of the property required by the Grandlieus, the abbé determined to get another hundred thousand out of Monsieur de Nucingen as a preliminary. In this way. By his orders, Asia paid a visit to the baron in the character of an old woman cognizant of the affairs of the girl in search of whom Nucingen was now employing the police.

Up to the present time various writers on manners and morals have described many usurers; but the female usurer who traffics with her sex has been neglected. She is called decently a *marchande de toilette;* and this was the part which Asia was now about to play.

"You are to put yourself in the skin of Madame de Saint-Estève," he said.

He insisted on seeing her dressed for the part; and

she came in a gown of flowered damask, made apparently from the curtains of some boudoir that had come under the hammer, wearing one of those faded, worn, unsalable shawls which end their lives on the backs of such women. She wore a collarette of splendid but ragged lace, and a shocking bonnet; but her shoes were of Irish kid, round the edges of which her flesh puffed out like a cushion, covered with open-work black silk stockings.

"Look at the buckle of my belt," she said, pointing to an article of questionable jewelry which her portly stomach pushed forwards. "*Hein!* what style! And the false front, — does n't it make me fine and ugly?"

"Mind that you are honey itself, at first," said the abbé. "Be almost timid, wary as a cat, and, above all, make the baron ashamed of having employed the police; but don't seem to fear them. Make him understand, in terms more or less clear, that you defy all the police in the world to discover where she is. Hide your traces. When the baron has given you a chance to put on the screws, get insolent, and work him like a lacquey."

Nucingen, threatened by Asia that if he watched her he should never see her again, and would thus lose all trace of Esther, met her, mysteriously, in a wretched apartment in the rue Neuve-Saint-Marc, lent by some one, but by whom the baron was unable to ascertain. There "Madame de Saint-Estève" led him through various stages of hope and despair, playing one against the other, until the baron was brought to the point of offering *any price* for information about his undiscoverable beauty.

During this time the sheriff's officer was proceeding through the various legal steps (meeting, of course, with no opposition from the unconscious Esther) which were necessary to make the arrest in due course of law.

Lucien, accompanied, or rather conducted, by the abbé, had paid poor Esther some five or six visits in her retreat at Saint-Germain. The cruel conductor of these machinations had judged a few such interviews necessary to prevent Esther from fading away, for her beauty now represented to him capital. On the last of these visits he took Lucien and the poor girl along a deserted road to an open spot whence they could see Paris, and where no one could overhear them. All three sat down on the trunk of a fallen poplar, facing the magnificent landscape, one of the finest in the world, which takes in the valley of the Seine, Montmartre, Paris, and Saint-Denis.

"My children," said the abbé, "your dream is over. You, my dear, will never see Lucien again; or, if you do see him, you must only have known him five years ago for a short time."

"My death has come at last," she said, without a tear.

"Well, you have been ill five years," said the abbé. "Fancy yourself consumptive, and die without boring us with elegies. But you will soon see that it is worth your while to live, and live splendidly. Leave us, Lucien; go and gather sonnets," he said, pointing to a meadow not far distant.

Lucien cast upon Esther an imploring look, one of those craven looks proper to weak and covetous men,

— men who are full of tenderness in the heart and baseness in the character. Esther answered by a sign of her head, which seemed to say, "I will listen to the executioner, and learn how to lay my head upon the block, and I will have the courage to die well."

The gesture was so gracious, and yet so full of horror, that the poet wept. Esther ran to him, took him in her arms, and drank his tears. "Don't suffer!" she said, — one of those sayings which are uttered with the gestures and the glance and the voice of delirium.

The abbé at once explained to her clearly, succinctly, without ambiguity, often with horribly plain words, Lucien's critical situation, his position at the hôtel de Grandlieu, his splendid life in case of triumph, and the absolute necessity that Esther should sacrifice herself to this magnificent future.

"What must I do?" she cried, spell-bound.

"Obey blindly," said Jacques Collin. "Why should you complain? It rests with you to have a splendid future. You shall become what your former friends — Tullia, Mariette, Florine, and the Val-Noble — now are, the mistress of a rich man whom you do not love. Our money once obtained, he is rich enough to give you everything to make you happy."

"Happy!" she said, raising her eyes to heaven.

"You have had five years of paradise," he said. "Cannot you live on those memories? You owe them to Lucien; will you now destroy his career?"

"I will obey you," she replied, wiping a tear from the corner of her eyes. "Do not be uneasy. You said true; my love is a mortal disease."

"But that is not all," said the master of her fate; "you must continue beautiful. At twenty-two years of age you are at your highest point of beauty, thanks to your love. In short, make yourself once more La Torpille. Be lively, whimsical, extravagant, scheming, and pitiless to the millionnaire whom I will send you. Listen to me; that man has been pitiless to many. He has enriched himself with the money of widows and orphans; you will be their vengeance! Asia will come here this evening with a coach and take you to Paris. If you allow a suspicion of your past relations to Lucien to get abroad, you might as well put a pistol shot through his head. People will ask you where you have been during the last five years; you must answer that an Englishman took you to travel. You had plenty of wit in former days for foolery; have it again."

Did you ever see a glittering kite, that giant butterfly of our infancy, sparkling with gold, and soaring toward heaven? The child forgets the cord for an instant; it slips from his hand, the meteor pitches — as we say in school-boy language — downward, and falls with terrifying rapidity. Such was Esther as she listened to that man.

## IX.

### A HUNDRED THOUSAND FRANCS INVESTED IN ASIA.

For more than a week Nucingen bargained almost daily at the house in the rue Neuve-Saint-Marc for the delivery of the woman he desired. There sat Asia in the midst of handsome garments and finery that have reached the horrid stage in which they are no longer gowns and garlands, but are not yet tatters. The frame was in keeping with the face of the woman now occupying it; these shops, called those of the "marchandes de toilettes," are among the most awful and sinister peculiarities of Paris. Here we see the last frippery of a human life cast by death's fleshless fingers; we hear the rattle of consumptive lungs beneath a shawl; we divine the anguish of poverty in those pawned glittering gowns. The cruel struggle between Luxury and Hunger is written on many a flimsey lace. The countenance of one who was a queen is beneath that plumed turban, the pose of which recalls, nay, almost replaces, the absent face. 'T is the hideous in the brilliant! The lash of Juvenal, in the hands of the official auctioneer, scatters about these moth-eaten muffs and faded furs of despairing Messalinas. 'T is a manure-heap of flowers where, here and there, glow the roses cut but yesterday, and worn but a single day; over which an old

woman ever crouches, cousin-german to the usurer, a bald and toothless crone, waiting to sell its contents,—the gown without the woman, the woman without the gown.

Asia was there like the keeper of the galleys, like the vulture with its beak reddened upon corpses,—there in the bosom of her element, more awful even than the savage horrors in the midst of which these women ply their trade.

From one irritation to another, adding ten thousand to ten thousand, the banker at last offered sixty thousand francs to "Madame de Saint-Estève," who refused with a grimace that might have rivalled that of a dog-faced monkey. After an agitated night, in which he recognized what disorder this vehement desire was working in his brain, and after a day of unexpected gains at the Bourse, he arrived one morning with the intention of paying the hundred thousand francs demanded by Asia; but he was also determined to drag out of her a vast amount of information.

"So you 've made up your mind, you old rogue," said Asia, tapping him on the shoulder.

The most degrading familiarity is the first tax which women of this sort levy on the unbridled passions, or the abject miseries which intrust themselves to their hands. They never rise to the level of their clients; they make them sit down beside them on their muck-heap. Asia, as we see, was obeying her master strictly.

"I 'm forced to," replied Nucingen.

"Well, you are not robbed," returned Asia; "many women are sold much dearer, relatively. It is true

you pay a hundred thousand francs for her at the first start; but what 's that to you, old croaker?"

"Where is she?"

"Ah! you shall see her. I 'm like you, — nothing for nothing. Ah, *ça!* my old man; your beauty has got into trouble. 'T is n't reasonable in young girls; but she is just now what we call a night-bird."

"A what?"

"Come, now, don't play the ninny. She has got Louchard at her heels. I 've lent her, myself, fifty thousand francs."

"Twenty-five, more likely!" cried the banker.

"*Parbleu!* twenty-five for fifty, of course," replied Asia. "To do her justice, she is honesty itself. She had nothing to pay with but herself, and so she came to me and said, 'My dear Madame Saint-Estève, I am sued; and not a soul can help me but you. Give me twenty thousand francs, and take a mortgage on my heart.' Oh, she 's got a good heart! Nobody but me knows where she is, because she 's hiding, you see; and if the police were to find it out I should lose my twenty thousand francs. She used to live in the rue Taitbout; but they 've put an execution in there and seized her furniture, — those rascally sheriffs! And now they talk of selling it."

"So you play banker, do you?" said Nucingen.

"Of course I do," returned Asia. "I lend to pretty women, and they return it; that 's how I discount two notes at once."

"Well, if I promise you that hundred thousand francs, where shall I see her?" he cried, with the gesture of a man who decides to make every sacrifice.

"Well, old fellow, come this evening in a carriage, and wait for me opposite to the Gymnase. It is on the road," said Asia. "Stop at the corner of the rue Saint-Barbe. I'll be there, and we'll go and find my mortgage with the black hair. Oh, such hair, — my mortgage! If she takes out her comb it rolls all over her like a flag. But I advise you to hide her away carefully; for, though you're a banker, you seem to me rather a nincompoop in other ways. I warn you they'll clap her into Sainte-Pélagie if they find her; and they are looking for her everywhere."

"I can arrange all that," said the banker, "when it is once understood that I'm her protector."

At nine o'clock that evening he found Asia at the appointed place, and took her into the carriage.

"Where?" said the baron.

"Where?" repeated Asia, — "rue de la Perle, in the Marais; only a stopping-place. Your pearl is in the mud; but you'll wash it off."

When they reached the place she said, with a frightful grin: "Now we'll go a little way on foot; I'm not such a fool as to give the right address."

"You think of everything," said the baron.

"That's my business," she replied.

Asia took him to the rue Barbette, where, in a furnished house, kept by an upholsterer of the neighborhood, he was taken up to the fourth floor. When he saw Esther in a meanly furnished room, dressed as a working-girl, and doing some embroidery, the millionnaire turned pale. At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which time Asia had made conversation with Esther, the old man could scarcely speak.

"Mademoiselle," he said at last to the poor girl, "will you have the kindness to accept me for your protector?"

"I must, monsieur," said Esther, two heavy tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Do not weep; I will make you the happiest of women. Only let me love you, and you shall see."

"My dear," said Asia, "monsieur is very reasonable; he knows he is over sixty-five, and he will be very indulgent. In short, my little angel, I have found you a father. Better tell her that," she whispered to the surprised banker; "you can't catch swallows with pistol-shots. Come here," she added, dragging Nucingen into the next room, — "you remember our little agreement, old man?"

Nucingen drew from the pocket of his coat a portfolio, out of which he took and counted the hundred thousand francs, which the abbé, hidden in a closet, was awaiting with keen impatience, and which Asia presently made over to him.

"Here 's the hundred thousand francs our man invests in Asia," he said to her when they reached the landing; "now he must be made to invest in Europe."

He disappeared after giving his instructions to the woman, who re-entered the room where Esther was weeping bitterly. The girl, like a criminal condemned to death, had made a romance of hope, but the fatal hour had come.

"My dear children," said Asia, "where will you go? for you cannot stay in such a place as this. Madame's former maid," she added, addressing Nucingen, "can take you in at madame's old lodgings in

the rue Taitbout. Louchard and the sheriff's officer will never think of looking for her there — "

"That will do! that will do!" cried the banker. "Besides, I know Louchard, who is a commercial guard, very well. I have ways of getting rid of him."

Asia took Nucingen aside, and said: —

"For five hundred francs a month paid to Eugènie, who is making her pile fast, you can know everything that madame does. Keep her as madame's maid; but put a curb on her. She 's all for money, that girl, — horrid!"

"What of you?"

"I?" said Asia, — "I 'm only paying myself back."

Nucingen, sly and cautious as he was, had a bandage about his eyes, and let himself be managed like an infant.

"Will you come to the rue Taitbout?" he said to Esther.

"Where you please, monsieur," she replied, rising.

"Where I please!" he replied, with delight. "You are an angel from heaven, whom I love as if I were a young man, though my hair is gray."

"Gray!" cried Asia, "better say white. It is dyed too black a black to be only gray."

"Go, you vile seller of human flesh! You have your money; don't come near this flower again," cried the banker, revenging himself by this apostrophe for all the insolence she had made him bear. Then he gave his arm to Esther and took her as she was to the carriage, with more respect, perhaps, than he would have shown to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.

When they reached the rue Taitbout, Esther was overcome by the sorrowful impressions produced upon her by the scene of her happiness. She sat down on a sofa, motionless, brushing away her tears as they fell, and not even hearing one word of the professions which the baron was stammering at her feet. She let him stay there without notice; she left her hands in his when he took them, unconscious who, or of what sex, the creature was who knelt beside her. This scene of scalding tears falling on the baron's head, and entreaties on his part, lasted more than an hour. At last he called to Europe.

"Eugènie," he said, "persuade your mistress to listen to me."

"No," cried Esther, springing up like a frightened horse, "never here!"

"Listen to me, monsieur," said Europe. "I know madame; she is good and gentle as a lamb. But you must n't be rough; you must take the right way with her. She has been so unhappy here! See how shabby this furniture is. Let her follow her own ideas now. Find some pretty house for her and arrange it nicely. When she sees everything new about her she 'll feel differently; I dare say she 'll think you better than you are, and be as gentle as an angel. Madame has n't her equal for goodness! You may boast of your acquisition, indeed, — such a kind heart, and pretty manners, ah, and wit enough to make a man laugh on his way to the scaffold! And, then, does n't madame know how to dress! But it is too bad, — all her pretty gowns are seized! I know how she feels, for I love her; she 's my mistress. A woman like her to see her-

self here in the midst of her furniture attached by the sheriff! You must be just to her, poor little woman; she is not herself!"

"Esther, Esther," said the baron, "if it is I who frighten you, leave me; go to your room. I will stay here alone," he cried, prompted by real love at the sight of her tears.

"Ah," she said, taking his hand and kissing it with a gratitude that brought something like a tear to the eyes of the hard man of business, "I will thank you forever!" and she fled to her chamber, where she locked herself in.

"There is something inexplicable in all this," said Nucingen to himself, sitting down on the sofa. Then he rose and looked out of the window. It was just daylight. He walked about the room, and listened at the door of the chamber.

"Esther!" No answer. "She is weeping still!" he cried, throwing himself on the sofa.

Less than ten minutes after the sun rose the baron was roused with a bound by Europe, who rushed into the room crying out: —

"Oh, madame, madame! the soldiers! the police! They 've come to arrest you!"

At the moment when Esther opened her door and showed herself, with her dressing-gown hastily thrown on, her feet in slippers, and her hair in disorder, the door of the *salon* gave entrance to a crowd of officials and gendarmes. One of them, Contenson, a member of the detective police, went up to her and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"You are Mademoiselle Esther van Gobseck?" he said.

Europe, with a back-handed blow upon his cheek, sent him reeling.

"Back!" she cried; "you shall not touch my mistress."

From the crowd of soldiers and bailiffs Louchard now advanced, with his hat on his head, laughing.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I arrest you. As for you, my girl," — this to Europe, — "obstruction will be punished, and resistance is useless."

The sound of the muskets, as they were dropped on the tiles of the antechamber, showed the number of the guard, and enforced the words.

"But why do you arrest me?" asked Esther.

"How about our little debts?" asked Louchard.

"Ah, true!" cried Esther; "let me dress myself."

All this took place so rapidly that the baron had had no time to interfere. He now threw himself between Esther and Louchard, who hastily took off his hat as Contenson called out: —

"Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen."

At a sign from Louchard the squad of men vacated the room. Contenson alone remained.

"Will monsieur le baron pay?" asked the officer, hat in hand.

"I will pay," said the banker; "but I must know what all this means."

"The sum is three hundred and twelve thousand francs, costs of suits and of arrest not included."

"Three hundred thousand francs!" cried the baron; "the sum is too high."

"Oh, monsieur!" interrupted Europe, "can you have the heart to let my mistress go to prison? Take

my wages, my savings, — take them, madame; I have forty thousand francs."

"Ah, my poor girl, I have never done you justice!" said Esther, pressing Europe in her arms. Europe burst into tears.

"I will pay!" said the baron, piteously, pulling out a cheque-book, and preparing to fill out a cheque.

"Don't give yourself that trouble, monsieur le baron," said Louchard; "my orders are to take nothing but gold or silver. But, as you are concerned in the matter, I will consent to receive bank-bills."

"The devil!" cried the baron. "Show me the papers. Ah, my child," he said to Esther, as soon as he saw the bill of exchange bearing Georges d'Estourny's name, "you are the victim of a great scoundrel, a swindler!"

"Alas! yes," said poor Esther; "but he was fond of me once."

"Will monsieur le baron write a line to his cashier?" said Louchard. "I'll send Contenson to him, and dismiss my men. It is getting late, and everybody will know —"

"Right!" said Nucingen, "send at once; my cashier lives at the corner of the rue des Mathurins. I will give you a line, and he will bring the money."

Louchard took the bills of exchange from the baron, and remained alone with him in the *salon*. Esther returned to her room. In about half an hour Contenson came back with the cashier. Esther then reappeared, having dressed herself. When Louchard had counted the money, and the bills were handed over to Nucingen, Esther seized them from him with the gesture of a kitten, and put them in her secretary.

Louchard departed, followed by Contenson; but as soon as they reached the boulevard, Asia, who was on the watch, stopped them.

"The agent and the creditor are here in a coach," she said. "They are thirsty for their property, and there 's money in it for you," she added.

While Louchard counted out the money, Contenson examined the clients. He saw the abbé's eyes; he noticed the shape of his forehead under the wig, and the wig seemed to him suspicious. He took the number of the hackney-coach, while apparently indifferent to what was going on. Asia and Europe puzzled him to the last degree. He felt certain that the baron was being victimized by a very able set of rogues, — all the more because Louchard, in asking for his help, had been unusually reticent.

The disguised abbé dismissed Louchard, paid him generously, and got into the hackney-coach, saying: —

"Palais-Royal, — the portico!"

"Ah, the rascal!" thought Contenson, overhearing the order; "there 's something under all this."

The abbé reached the Palais-Royal at a pace that relieved him of all fear of being followed. He crossed the galleries after his own fashion, took another hackney-coach near the Château-d'Eau, saying, "Passage de l'Opéra on the side of the rue Pinon." Fifteen minutes later he was back in the rue Taitbout.

As soon as Esther saw him she cried out, giving him the bills of exchange: —

"Here are those fatal papers!"

The abbé took them, looked them carefully over, and then went and burned them in the kitchen fire.

"The trick is played," he said, showing the three hundred thousand francs rolled in a packet which he took from the pocket of his overcoat. "These and Asia's hundred thousand will enable us to act."

"Oh, my God!" cried poor Esther.

"Idiot!" said the savage sharper, "be Nucingen's mistress ostensibly, and you can still see Lucien; he is Nucingen's friend. I don't forbid your seeing him."

Esther saw a faint ray of light in her darkness, and breathed freer.

"Europe, my girl," said the abbé, taking the woman into the boudoir where not a word of the conversation could be overheard, "I am satisfied with you."

Europe raised her head and looked at this man with an expression that so changed her blighted face that Asia, who was watching at the door, asked herself by what chain he held Europe which was stronger than that by which she herself was riveted to him.

"But the thing is not all done yet," he went on. "Four hundred thousand francs are not enough for me. There's a bill for silver-plate which amounts to thirty thousand francs, on which something has been paid; but Biddin, the jeweller, has been put to some costs. The furniture will be attached by him to-morrow. See him to-day; he lives rue de l'Arbre-Sec. He will give you pawn-tickets of the Mont-de-Piété for ten thousand francs. You understand? Esther had the silver made, and has n't paid for it, but pawned it; she is threatened with a complaint for swindling. Therefore *he* must pay thirty thousand to the jeweller, and ten thousand to the Mont-de-Piété, to recover the property. With the costs, that will be forty-three

thousand francs. That plate has loads of alloy in it. The baron will want to replace it; we can get a little off of him that way. You owe — how much for two years to the dressmaker?"

"Six thousand francs or so," replied Europe.

"Well, if Madame Auguste wants to be paid and keep our custom, she must make out a bill for thirty thousand francs standing four years. Do the same with the milliner. That Jew in the rue Saint-Avoie, Samuel Frisch, the jeweller, will help you; we must owe him twenty-five thousand, and have the jewelry in pawn for six thousand. We return the jewels to him, which are half false, so the baron must not be allowed to examine them too closely. In short, you must make him vomit at least a hundred and fifty thousand francs within the next week."

"Madame ought to help me a little," replied Europe. "Speak to her; she sits like one daft, and obliges me to have more wit than three authors to one play."

"If Esther turns prude, let me know," said the abbé. "Nucingen will give her a carriage and horses, and she must insist on choosing them herself. Buy them from the man where Paccard is employed. You can get fine horses there, very dear, and they 'll go lame in a month, and he 'll have to get others."

"One might get five or six thousand francs on the perfumer's bill," said Europe.

"Oh," said the abbé, shaking his head, "go gently, screw by screw! Nucingen has only put one arm in the machine as yet; we must get his whole head in. Besides all this, I shall want another five hundred thousand."

"You 'll have them," replied Europe; "madame will soften about the sixth hundred thousand, and the rest she can get for you herself."

"Listen to me, my girl," said the abbé; "the day I receive the last hundred thousand, you shall have twenty thousand for yourself."

"What good will they do me?" said Europe, letting her arms drop like one to whom existence is impossible.

"You can go back to Valenciennes, buy a fine business, and become an honest woman if you choose, — every one to his taste in this world. Paccard thinks of it; his shoulder is clear, and he has n't much on his conscience. You and he can marry."

"Go back to Valenciennes! how can you say so, monsieur?" cried Europe, as if terrified.

Born in Valenciennes, of poor weavers, Europe was sent at seven years of age into a rope-walk, where modern industry abused her physical forces, and vice depraved her before her time. Corrupted at twelve, a mother before she was thirteen, she found herself fastened for life to degraded beings. In consequence of a murder she was brought before the court of assizes as a witness. Influenced at sixteen by a last remnant of integrity, and by fear of the law, she told the truth, and her evidence condemned the accused to twenty years at the galleys. The criminal, known for his ferocious and revengeful nature, said to the girl, before the whole court-room: "In ten years from now, Prudence (Europe's name was Prudence Servien), I 'll return to put you under ground, if I go to the scaffold for it." The president of the court endeavored to

reassure the girl, promising her the protection and watchfulness of the law; but the poor creature was so terrified that she fell ill, and was a year in hospital.

Law, or call it Justice, is a reasoning being, represented by a collection of individuals who are constantly removed and renewed; whose good intentions and recollections are, like themselves, extremely ambulatory. The courts can do nothing to prevent crime; they are invented to deal with them ready made. A preventive police would be a blessing to any country; but the word police frightens the legislator of to day, who no longer knows how to distinguish between the terms, to govern, to administrate, to make laws. The legislator now tends to gather up all into the State, as it were capable of acting.

The convict, no doubt, continued to think of his victim and of his vengeance when law and justice had forgotten all about them. Prudence, who understood her danger, left Valenciennes and came, when seventeen years old, to Paris, thinking she could be better hidden there. She took up four callings, the best of which was supernumerary at a minor theatre. There she met Paccard, to whom she related her troubles. Paccard, the right arm and henchman of Jacques Collin, spoke of Prudence to his master; and when the master wanted a slave, he said to Prudence, "If you will serve me as people are made to serve the devil, I 'll rid you of Durut," — Durut being the convict and the sword of Damocles over her head. Without these details Europe's devotion might seem unnatural; and no one would have understood the scenic effect the abbé now produced.

"Yes, my girl, you can safely return to Valenciennes. Here, read that," and he took a newspaper from his pocket, and pointed to an article headed: "*Toulon.* Yesterday, the execution of Jean-François Durut took place. From early morning the garrison," etc., etc.

Prudence let fall the paper; her legs gave way under the weight of her body. Life came back to her, for she had not, as she said herself, known a relish for food since the day of Durut's threat.

"You see I have kept my word. It has taken me four years to inveigle Durut and drop his head into the basket. Well, now, then, finish my work here, and you shall be put into a nice little business in your own town, rich by twenty thousand francs, and married to Paccard, to whom I'll grant virtue as a retiring pension."

Europe picked up the paper and read with glaring eyes the details which all newspapers have never wearied of giving for the last twenty years about the execution of criminals, — the imposing scene, the priest who converts the patient, the hardened criminal who exhorts his late colleagues, the artillery drawn up in line with cannon pointed, the kneeling galley-slaves, and the trite and commonplace reflections, which do nothing to change the condition of the galleys where eighteen thousand crimes are swarming.

"Asia must come back here as cook," said the abbé, signing to her to join them, "and Paccard must be coachman instead of *chasseur.* Coachmen don't leave their box, and are not so much watched as footmen."

"Are we to have other servants?" asked Asia, doubtfully.

"Honest people," replied Herrera.

"Weak fools!" retorted Asia.

"If the baron hires a house, Paccard has a friend who will do for concierge," said the abbé. "Then we shall need a footman and a kitchen-girl; you can very well manage two strangers."

As the abbé was about to leave the house Paccard appeared.

"Wait," said the *chasseur*, "there are people in the street."

Those simple words were so alarming that Herrera went up to Europe's room and remained there until Paccard returned with a hired carriage, which was driven into the court-yard. When he reached the faubourg Saint-Antoine, the abbé got out and walked to a stand of hackney-coaches, where he took one and returned to the quai Malaquais, thus baffling any possible curiosity.

"Here, my boy," he said, showing Lucien the four hundred thousand francs in notes, — "here's a first payment on account for the estate of Rubempré. I propose to speculate with one hundred thousand of it. They've just put that Omnibus stock on the market. Parisians will be taken by such a novelty, and we'll triple the investment in six months. I know the ins and outs of it; they mean to pay splendid dividends at first out of the capital to run up the stock, — an idea of Nucingen's. In recovering the Rubempré estate we need n't pay the whole cost immediately. You must see des Lupeaulx, and ask him to recommend you to a lawyer named Desroches, a sharp rascal, whom you should see at his own office. Tell him to go to Ru-

bempré and study the ground; promise him a fee of twenty thousand francs if he will manage to buy you for eight hundred thousand francs land enough around the ruins of the old château to give you a rental of thirty thousand a year."

"How you go! you go! you go!"

"Yes, I go on and on. But no joking now. Go and put three hundred thousand at once into Treasury bonds, so as to lose no interest. You can safely leave them with Desroches; he's as honest as he is sly. Having done that, go to Angoulême; see your sister and David Séchard, and coax them to tell a little official lie in your behalf. Your relations must be supposed to have given you six hundred thousand francs to facilitate your marriage with Clotilde de Grandlieu; there's nothing dishonorable in that."

"We are saved!" cried Lucien, dazzled at the prospect.

"*You* are, yes," replied the abbé, "though not really saved until you come out of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with Clotilde as your wife."

"What do you fear for yourself?" asked Lucien, with much apparent interest.

"Some inquisitive persons, I don't yet know who, are on my traces," said the abbé. "I shall have to seem a real priest; and that's extremely annoying. The devil won't protect me if he sees me going about with a breviary under my arm."

## X.

### PROFIT AND LOSS.

If rich men of Baron de Nucingen's stripe have more occasions than other men for losing money, they have also far more opportunity for making it, even when indulging their follies. Though the financial policy of the famous banking-house of Nucingen has been fully explained elsewhere, it may not be useless to remark here that such large fortunes are not acquired, not consolidated, not augmented, and not preserved, during periods of commercial, political, and industrial revolution, without immense losses of capital, or, if you prefer it, without enormous taxes being levied on private fortunes. Very little fresh wealth is poured into the common treasury of the globe. All additional monopoly represents some new inequality in the general distribution of it. What the State exacts it returns; but what a house like that of Nucingen takes it keeps. This *coup de Jarnac* escapes the law, for the reason that would have made Frederick II. a Jacques Collin, or a Mandrin, if, instead of operating on provinces with battles, he had spent his energies in outlawry, or in manipulating stocks. To force the European States to borrow at twenty or ten per cent, to gain these ten or twenty per cent with the capital of the people, to levy a tax on industries by seizing raw material, to fling a rope to the originator

of some enterprise and bring him to the surface of the water just long enough to fish out his submerged plan, — in short, all such battles for lucre constitute the statecraft of money. Certainly, there are risks for the banker as for the conqueror; but there are so few persons in a position to fight him that the flock know nothing of it. These great manœuvres take place only among the shepherds. Moreover, as the "executed" (consecrated slang term for the Bourse gamblers who fail) are always guilty of trying to make unholy gains, very little interest is felt in misfortunes caused by such manœuvres as those of the house of Nucingen. When a speculator blows out his brains, a broker takes to flight, a notary carries off the means of a hundred households (which is far worse than killing one man), or a banker goes into liquidation, — such catastrophes, forgotten in Paris in a few months, are soon covered by the tumbling waves of the great city. The colossal fortunes of such beings as Jacques Cœur, the Medici, Ango of Dieppe, the Auffredis of La Rochelle, the Fuggers, the Tiepolos, and the Corners, were honestly obtained by privileges due to the ignorance which prevailed in those days of the source of precious commodities. But to-day geographical knowledge has so penetrated the masses, competition has so limited profits, that all rapidly acquired wealth is either the result of chance or of some discovery, or else the result of a legal theft. Corrupted by scandalous examples, trade has carried out, especially within the last ten years, the treacherous practices of commerce by shameful adulterations of raw material. Wherever chemistry is known wine is no longer drunk, and the

vine-growing industry languishes. Salt is adulterated to cheat the treasury. The courts are alarmed by this widespread dishonesty. In short, French commerce is distrusted by the whole world, and England is getting equally demoralized. The evil comes, with us, from our political régime. The Charter proclaimed the kingship of money; material success becomes, therefore, the main object of an atheistical epoch. Corruption in the higher spheres is, in spite of the dazzling results of wealth and their specious reasons, infinitely more hideous than the ignoble and quasi-personal corruptions in the lower spheres, — a few details of which play the comic, or, if you choose, the terrible, in this scene. The ministers, afraid of all new thought, have banished the comic of the present day from the stage. The bourgeoisie, less liberal than Louis XIV., tremble at a modern "Mariage de Figaro," forbid the presentation of a political "Tartuffe," and, most certainly, would not allow "Turcaret" to be played in these days; for Turcaret is now supreme. Consequently, the comic must be related, not played; books become a weapon, less rapid, it is true, but more sure than the drama of the poets.

Sure of obtaining Esther sooner or later, the baron became once more the great financier that he was. He went back to the direction of his affairs with such readiness that his cashier found him at six o'clock on the following morning in his counting-room looking over his securities and rubbing his hands. During the morning, in the midst of the coming and going of clients and the giving of orders, one of his brokers informed him of the disappearance of a brother broker, —

the cleverest and richest of them all, — Jacques Falleix, successor of Jules Desmarets. He was chief broker to the firm of Nucingen. In conjunction with du Tillet and the Kellers, the baron had brought about the ruin of this man as coolly as he might have ordered the killing of a sheep for the Passover.

"He could n't hold on," replied Nucingen, tranquilly.

Jacques Falleix had rendered enormous services to stock-jobbers. But to expect gratitude from these money-lynxes is like asking the wolves of the Ukraine in winter not to eat you up.

"Poor man!" replied the broker, "he so little expected this disaster that he had just furnished a charming little house in the place Saint-Georges for his mistress. He spent more than a hundred and fifty thousand francs in furniture and pictures alone."

"Ah!" said Nucingen, "had he paid anything on them?"

"No," said the broker, "no upholsterer or picture-dealer would have feared to give him credit. It seems he had a fine cellar. The house was for sale, and he meant to buy it. The lease is in his own name; what a piece of folly! The result is that everything — plate, furniture, wines, carriage, and horses — goes to the hammer, and what will the creditors get?"

"Come to-morrow," said Nucingen. "I will go and see the place; if no bankruptcy is declared, we 'll arrange matters quietly, and you can offer a reasonable price for the whole, taking the lease."

"Oh, that can be done easily!" said the broker. "If you go there this morning, you 'll find one of Falleix's partners with the upholsterers, who are trying to prove a first claim on the property."

This failure forced the baron to go to the Bourse, but in leaving the rue Saint-Lazare he was unable to resist going through the rue Taitbout. The gain he expected to make out of the ruin of his broker made the loss of his four hundred thousand francs comparatively light; and he wanted to announce to his angel that she would soon be mistress of a "little balace" (as he said in his German accent), where no fond memories would oppose their happiness. At the corner of the rue des Trois-Frères he met Europe, her face quite convulsed.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Oh, monsieur, I was going to you! Such a misfortune! When madame's creditors found out she had returned, they came down upon us like a flock of vultures. Yesterday, at seven in the morning, the sheriff came and put up the posters announcing the sale of all her effects for Saturday next. But that's comparatively nothing; Madame, who is all heart, wanted to oblige that monster of a man — you know?"

"What monster?"

"Well, the one she loved, d'Estourny. Oh, he was charming! He gambled, — that was all."

"He played with marked cards —"

"Well, — and you," said Europe, "what do you do at the Bourse? But let me tell you. One day, to prevent d'Estourny from blowing his brains out, as he threatened, she pawned all her plate and jewels, which were not paid for; and now the creditors have found it out, and they threaten her with the police court. Fancy what a horror to see her in the dock! She is

crying bitterly, and wants to throw herself into the river, — and she will, too."

"If I go to see her," cried Nucingen, "I have n't time to go to the Bourse; and I must go, for I want to gain something for her. Try to calm her; tell her I 'll pay her debts, and will see her at four o'clock. But, Eugènie, persuade her to love me a little."

"A little! I promise you a great deal; for, don't you see, monsieur, there 's nothing like generosity to win women's hearts. I 've told madame already that if she did n't love you she 'd be the lowest of womankind, for you were taking her out of hell. As soon as her worries are all over, you 'll see how different she will be. Between ourselves, that night she cried so, she dared not tell you all this, — she wanted to run away, and —"

"Run away!" cried the baron, alarmed at the idea; "but the Bourse! the Bourse! I must go, — say that I will be with her at four o'clock."

Europe delivered the message, adding, "Won't you show a little affection for a poor old man who is going to pay your debts, — every one of them?"

"Debts! what debts?" cried Esther.

"Those that Monsieur Carlos incurred for madame."

"But he has had already four hundred thousand francs."

"There 's a hundred and fifty thousand more unpaid. But he has taken it all in good part, — the baron has. He says he is going to get you out of here, and put you in a 'little balace.' Faith, you 're lucky! If I were you, inasmuch as you hold that man by the safe end, I should make him, after you have

done all Monsieur Carlos wants, give me a house and an income. Madame is certainly the prettiest woman I ever saw, and the most engaging; but ugliness comes fast. I was fresh and pretty myself, and look at me now! I am twenty-three years old, almost as young as madame, but I look ten years older. One illness will do it. Well, if you have a house in Paris and an income, there 's no fear of ending on the streets."

Esther was no longer listening to Europe-Eugénie-Prudence Servien. The will of a man endowed with the genius of corruption had plunged her back into the mud with the same force that he had used in pulling her out of it. Those who know love in its infinity know that its joy cannot be experienced without accepting its obligations. Since the scene with the priest in her squalid room in the rue d'Anglade, Esther had completely forgotten her past; she had lived virtuously in thought and deed, cloistered in her love. To meet with no obstacles, the all-knowing corrupter had so wisely prepared his scheme that the poor girl, impelled by her devotion, had now only to give her consent to knavery committed, or about to be committed. This astuteness reveals the process by which he had brought Lucien under complete subjection to his will. To create terrible necessities, to dig the mine, fill it with powder, and at the critical moment to say to his helpless accomplice, "Do this, or ruin comes," — this was the situation.

In her former life, Esther, born to the peculiar morality of courtesans, estimated her rivals by the sums they could persuade men to spend upon them. For-

tunes squandered were badges of honor to these women. The abbé, counting upon this feature of Esther's life, was not mistaken. These tricks and stratagems, constantly employed not only by the women but by the spendthrifts themselves, did not affect Esther's mind. The girl felt only her own degradation. She loved Lucien, and was forced to be the mistress of Nucingen; all lay there to her. That the false abbé took the gains, that Lucien built the edifice of his fortunes with the stones of her tomb, that Europe should extract from the baron a few hundred thousand francs by means more or less tricky, did not occupy the girl's mind. The cancer that was eating into her soul was something different. For five years she had felt herself white as the angels. She loved, and she had not committed in thought or deed a single infidelity to that love, and now it was about to be soiled. Her mind did not contrast the years of her beautiful life with the vileness of her coming years. Neither reflection nor poesy moved her. What she felt was a feeling indefinable, but of boundless power: from white she was becoming black; from pure, impure; from noble, ignoble. Purified by her own will, the moral soiling seemed to her unendurable. When the baron threatened her with his love, her thought was to fling herself from the window. Pushed by an iron hand, she had gone to her middle in infamy without having time or power to reflect; but for the last two days reflection had come, and with it a deadly cold to her heart.

At Europe's words, "ending on the street," she sprang up, violently exclaiming: —

"End on the street? No, sooner in the Seine!"

"In the Seine?" said Europe. "And Monsieur Lucien?"

That name sent Esther back into her chair, where she sat with her eyes fixed on a pattern of the carpet, the furnace of her brain burning up her tears. At four o'clock Nucingen found her plunged in that ocean of reflections and resolutions in which the female mind is wont to float, and from which women issue with words incomprehensible to those who have not navigated the same waters.

"Do not look so sad, my dear," said the baron, sitting down beside her. "You shall have no debts; I will arrange with Eugénie. In a month you shall leave this apartment for a little palace. Oh, the pretty hand! Give it to me that I may weigh it." Esther let him take her hand as a dog gives its paw. "Ah, you give your hand, but you will not give your heart, and it is the heart I want!"

This was said in so sincere a tone that Esther turned her eyes upon the old man with an expression of pity that drove him well-nigh beside himself. There is no greater comprehension in the world than that of two corresponding sorrows.

"Poor man!" she said, "he loves!"

Hearing these words, which he misunderstood, the baron turned pale, his blood tingled in his veins, he breathed another air.

"I love you as much as I love my daughter," he said; "and I feel here" — laying his hand upon his heart — "that I do not wish to see you otherwise than happy."

"If you will indeed be my father, I will love you

well. I will never leave you; you shall never see me the bad and venal and grasping woman that I now seem to be."

"You have had your follies," replied the baron, "like other pretty women, that's all. Don't say another word about it. Our business, we men, is to make money for you. Be happy. I will, indeed, be your father for a few days; for I know you must get accustomed to my poor carcass."

"Truly?" she said, rising, and passing her arm about his neck.

"Truly," he answered, trying to put a smile upon his face.

She kissed him on the forehead, believing an impossible thing, — to be saved from infamy and see Lucien. She caressed the banker with her old fascination, and bewitched him so thoroughly that he promised to remain her father for the next month, reflecting that a month was necessary to complete the purchase and arrangement of Falleix's house in the Place Saint-Georges.

Once in the street, however, on his way home the baron said to himself, "I am a simpleton." In Esther's presence he was a child; away from her the lynx revived.

## XI.

### ABDICATION.

Toward the end of December, 1829, the little "balace" of the rue Saint-Georges was almost ready for occupation. All the inventions of luxury before the revolution of 1830 had made the house a type of good taste. Grindot, the architect, considered the decorations his *chef-d'œuvre.* The marble staircase, the stuccos, the stuffs, the gilding soberly applied, — in short, the smallest detail, as well as the greatest effects, surpassed all that the Louis XV. period has bequeathed to Paris.

The baron, driven to distraction, and still rebuffed by Esther, resolved to treat what he called the affair of his marriage by correspondence, hoping to obtain some written engagement. Bankers believe in letters. Consequently the lynx rose early one morning in January, and locked himself into his study, where he composed the following letter, written in very good French, for though he pronounced the language abominably, he wrote it well: —

Dear Esther, — Flower of my thoughts, and sole happiness of my life, when I told you that I would love you as my daughter, I deceived you and I deceived myself. I wished to express to you in that way the sacredness of my feelings, which resemble none that I have ever heard of, first, because I am an old man, and next, because I never loved

before. I love you so much that if you cost me my whole fortune I should not love you less. Be just: most men would not have seen, as I have done, an angel in you; but I have never cast one thought upon your past. I love you as I love my daughter Augusta, and as I would have loved my wife had my wife loved me. If love is the only absolution for an old man's love, ask yourself if I am not made to play a miserable part. I have made you the joy and the consolation of my old age. You know well that until my death you shall be made as happy as a woman can be; and you also know that after my death you shall be rich enough to make you envied by other women. In all the affairs of business about which I have talked to you, your share is first deducted and placed to your account with the house of Nucingen. In a few days you will move to a house which will sooner or later be your own if it pleases you. When there, will you still receive me only as your father, or will you make me happy?

Forgive me if I write to you plainly. When I am near you I have no courage; I feel that you master me. I do not mean to offend you; I only desire to tell you how I suffer and how cruel suspense is at my age. The delicacy of my conduct is a guarantee of the sincerity of my intentions. Have I acted like a creditor? You reply to my complaints that my wishes threaten your life, and I believe it when I am with you; but away from you I fall into doubts, which dishonor us both. You have seemed to me as good and candid as you are beautiful; but you take pains to destroy that conviction. You tell me you have a love in your heart, unconquerable, pitiless; you will not tell me for whom. See what my position is: I am obliged to ask you at the end of five months what future you intend to grant to me. I must know what rôle you mean me to play on taking possession of your house. Money is nothing to me where you are concerned. I am not so foolish as to make a merit of this in your eyes; but if my love is limitless my fortune is not, and

I would give all for you. Yes, if by giving you all I possess I could, a poor man, win your affection, I would rather be poor and loved by you, than be rich and despised. You have so changed me, my dear Esther, that I am not recognizable. I paid ten thousand francs for a picture by Joseph Bridau, because you said he was a man of talent and unrecognized. I give to every pauper I meet five francs in your name. Well, what does the old man, who feels himself your debtor when you do him the honor to accept his service, ask in return? Only a hope. I am ready to submit to all conditions; but tell me at least if, on the day you take possession of your house, you will accept the heart and servitude of him who is for the rest of his days

Your servant,

FRÉDÉRIC DE NUCINGEN.

On receiving this letter Esther hastily seized a sheet of note-paper, and wrote in large letters, covering the whole page, a phrase from Scribe's comedy (then in vogue), which has since, to his honor, become a proverb, "Prenez mon ours." A quarter of an hour later, after despatching the note, Esther, seized with remorse, wrote the following: —

MONSIEUR LE BARON, — Pay no attention to the letter you have just received from me; in writing it I returned to the heedless folly of my youth. Forgive, monsieur, a poor girl who ought to be a slave. I never felt the baseness of my lot as I have since the day on which I was delivered over to you. You have bought me and paid for me; I am owing to you. There is nothing, they say, so sacred as the debts of dishonor. I have not the right to liquidate mine by throwing myself into the Seine. It must be paid in that awful money which is good on one side only. You will find me therefore at your orders. I will pay once for all the sums that are

mortgaged upon me; that fatal moment will be the first and last and only payment. The debt paid, I am free to go out of life. A virtuous woman has chances to raise herself after a fall; but we, poor creatures, we fall too low. My resolution is so fixed that I beg you to keep this letter as a testimony to the cause of the death of her who will be for one day only

Your servant,

ESTHER.

This letter despatched, Esther again regretted it. Ten minutes later she wrote the following: —

Forgive me, dear baron; this is myself. I did not mean to mock you, nor to wound you; but I wish to make you reflect upon a simple argument. If we can stay together in the relation of father and daughter, you will have a feeble pleasure, but a lasting one; if you exact the fulfilment of the contract you will lose me. I will not worry you with further words. The day on which you choose pleasure, rather than happiness, will be without a morrow for me.

Your daughter,

ESTHER.

The stupidity of the moneyed man, though quasi-proverbial, is nevertheless only relative. There are faculties of the mind as there are aptitudes of the body. The dancer has his strength in his feet, the blacksmith in his arms, the singer works his throat, the pianist his wrists. A banker is trained to contrive affairs, to study them, to make interests act, just as a playwright contrives situations, studies them, and makes his personages act. Baron de Nucingen could no more be expected to perceive the situation than mathematicians can be expected to have the images of

a poet in their understanding. Equally distributed, the vital human force produces fools or mediocrities everywhere; unequally distributed, it gives birth to those abnormal natures, to which we give the name of *genius*, but which, if they were visibly clear to us, would seem deformities. The same law rules the body; perfect beauty is almost always accompanied by coldness or stupidity. In the sphere of speculative calculation, a banker displays as much mind, ability, shrewdness, and faculty, as the ablest statesman in national affairs. If, outside of his counting-room, he is remarkable he becomes a great man. Nucingen, multiplied by the Prince de Ligne, by Mazarin, or by Diderot, is an almost impossible human formula, though it has existed under the names of Pericles, Aristotle, Voltaire, and Napoleon. Monsieur de Nucingen, being a banker, and nothing more, had no faculty of perception outside of his calculations, like other bankers who believe only in actual values. In the matter of art, for instance, he had the good sense to go, money in hand, to experts, — to the best architect, the best connoisseur in pictures, in statues. But as there exists no expert, and no trustworthy connoisseur in love, a banker is terribly embarrassed in managing a woman. Nucingen, therefore, who was ill in his bed for a day after receiving these letters, saw nothing to do but what he had already done, and to trust that time, the little "balace," and his unceasing attentions would bring Esther to reason.

Under the system of espionage in which Esther was held, copies of the poor girl's letters were carried by Asia to the abbé. The anger of the man was, like

himself, terrible. He came at once in a carriage, with the blinds down, to Esther's house, ordering the driver to enter the court-yard. He was livid when he presented himself before her; she gazed at him for a moment, and then, happening to be on her feet, she staggered to a chair, her legs giving way beneath her.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" she said, quivering in every limb.

"Leave us, Europe," he said to the waiting-woman.

"Do you know where you are sending Lucien?" he asked when they were alone.

"Where?" she said in a feeble voice, trying to look up at the man.

"Where I come from, my girl."

Esther saw red as she looked at him.

"To the galleys," he added, in a low voice.

Esther closed her eyes. Her legs stretched out; her arms hung down. She turned white, and fainted. The man rang, and Prudence ran in.

"Bring her to," he said, coldly. "I have not done yet."

He walked up and down the *salon* while waiting. Presently Prudence came to ask him to lift Esther to her bed. He did so with an ease that showed his athletic strength. It needed the most powerful drugs to bring the girl back to the consciousness of her woes. In about an hour she was able to listen to her living nightmare as he sat at the foot of the bed, fixing upon her the terrible glance of his glittering eyes like streams of molten lead.

"My little girl," he resumed, "Lucien stands at this moment between a splendid, honored, happy, and

worthy life and the pool in the river, where he was about to cast himself when I first met him. The family of Grandlieu require him to possess an estate worth a million before they will obtain for him the title of marquis, and give him the hand of that great pole named Clotilde. Thanks to you and me Lucien has just bought his maternal manor, the old castle of Rubempré, which did not cost much, only thirty thousand francs. But his agent, by fortunate negotiations, has added to it adjoining property amounting to a million of francs, on which we have paid three hundred thousand francs down. The castle, the costs, and the premiums have absorbed the rest. We have, it is true, another hundred thousand francs invested, which in a few months will have more than doubled. But there will still remain four hundred thousand francs to be paid. In three days Lucien will return from Angoulême, where he has been to give color to his statement of the source from which the money comes, for he must not be suspected of finding it under your mattress — "

"Oh, no!" she cried, casting her eyes upward with exaltation.

"I ask you, therefore," he continued, unmoved, "is this a time to frighten away the baron? He fainted on reading your second letter. You have a fine style, and I congratulate you on it. If the baron had died of apoplexy, as he might have done, what would become of us? When Lucien comes out of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin the son-in-law of the Duc de Grandlieu, if you still want to go into the Seine, — well, my dear, I 'll take your hand and we 'll make the plunge together.

It is one way to end off; but reflect a little. Would n't it be better to live, and say to yourself at every turn, 'This brilliant fortune, this happy family'? — for he 'll have children, *children!* have you thought of the pleasure of putting your hand upon their little heads?" (Esther closed her eyes and quivered gently.) "Well, seeing the edifice of his happiness, you will be able to say, 'It is my work.'"

He made a pause, during which these two beings looked at each other.

"That is what I undertook to do for his despairing life when he was about to fling it into the water," resumed the abbé. "Am I a selfish man? That is how we should love. That is the devotion given to kings; and I have anointed him a king. They might rivet me for the rest of my days to my old chain, and I think I could be peaceful and happy, saying to myself, '*He* is at court; *he* is honored in the world; *he* is prosperous.' My soul and my thought would triumph while my carcass was toiling at the galleys. You are but a miserable woman; you love as a woman. If ever they discover under the skin of the Abbé Carlos the convict I once was, do you know what I should do rather than compromise Lucien?" (Esther listened anxiously.) "I should die as the negroes do, by swallowing my tongue. But you, with your affectations, are bringing ruin upon him. What have I asked of you? To put on La Torpille's petticoat for six months, for six weeks, — long enough to complete that million. Lucien will never forget you; men don't forget the being who is recalled to their mind daily by their prosperity. Lucien is worth more than you. He began by loving

Coralie; she died. Very good, but he had n't the means to bury her. Did he do as you did just now, — faint away? No, poet as he is, he wrote six rollicking songs, and earned the money to pay for her burial. I have those songs; I know them by heart. Well, do you compose your songs. Be gay, frolicking, irresistible, insatiable! You have heard me; don't oblige me to say this again. Kiss papa. Adieu."

When, half an hour later, Europe entered her mistress's room she found her kneeling before the crucifix. Having said her last prayers, Esther renounced her beautiful life, the honor she had tried to make for herself, her virtue, her future, her love. She rose.

"Oh, madame, you will never look like that again!" cried Prudence Servien, startled at the wondrous beauty of her mistress.

She hastily turned the psyche so that the girl might see herself. The eyes still kept a little of the soul that had gone to heaven. The Jewish tones of the skin sparkled. Moist with tears absorbed by the fire of her prayer, the lashes of her eyelids were like leafage after a summer's rain, — the sun of love had shone upon them for the last time. The lips still seemed to invoke the angels, from whom, perhaps, she had asked the palm of martyrdom as she gave into their hands her unstained life. She had the majesty which must have attended Mary Stuart at the moment when she bade adieu to crown and earth and love.

"I wish that Lucien could have seen me thus," she whispered softly, with a smothered sigh. "Now," she cried in a vibrant voice, "*blaguons!*"

Hearing that word, Europe stood aghast, as though she had heard an angel out of heaven blaspheme.

"Well, why do you look at me as if I had cloves in my mouth instead of teeth? I am nothing now but a thief, an infamous, unclean creature, a prostitute! and I await my lord. He'll come after the Bourse. I'll write and tell him I expect him. Asia is to serve a dainty dinner; I'll make a fool of him, — that man. Go, go, my girl; and now for folly — I mean *business*."

She sat down and wrote the following letter: —

My friend, — I have much curiosity to know how many times you fainted on receiving my three notes two days ago. But how could I help it? I was very nervous that day; I had been going over in my mind all the facts of my deplorable existence. I won't repent for having caused you so much grief, because it proves to me that I am really dear to you. That's how we are, we poor, despised creatures; a true affection touches us more than the money spent upon us. As for me, I feared I was only the hook on which you hang your vanities, and it vexed me not to be more than that to you. Yes, in spite of your fine protestations, I thought you only looked upon me as a bought woman. Well, now you shall find me a good girl, but on condition that you will still obey me. If this letter does you more good than your doctor's prescription, come and see me today on your way from the Bourse. You will find, under arms and adorned with your gifts, the creature who here declares herself, for life, your machine of pleasure.

Esther.

## XII.

### ESTHER REAPPEARS ON THE SURFACE OF PARIS.

It was exactly six years since Esther had been to a theatre. All Paris was at this time rushing to the Porte-Saint-Martin to see a play to which the power of the actors had given an expression of terrible reality,—"Richard d'Arlington." Like all ingenuous natures, Esther liked to tremble with horror as much as she liked to weep for sympathy.

"Let us go to see Frédérick Lemaître," she said to the baron after dinner. "I adore that actor, and I 'm hungry for the theatre."

"It is a cruel drama," he replied, as he ordered his servant to take one of the two proscenium boxes on the first tier. When a successful play fills a theatre, there is always a proscenium box to be hired ten minutes before the rising of the curtain; the directors retain it for themselves, unless at the last moment some one sends in haste to obtain it.

By an accident, so natural that it cannot be called chance, three of Esther's former companions — Tullia, Mariette, and Madame du Val-Noble — were present on this occasion. "Richard d'Arlington" was one of those wild successes (and well deserved) which are never obtained out of Paris. While seeing this drama, all the men began to think they had the right to throw

their legitimate wives out of the window, and all the wives thought it delightful to see themselves unjustly victimized. A beautiful creature like Esther, dressed exquisitely, could not display herself in a proscenium box on a crowded night with impunity. Therefore, after the end of the second act, a great commotion arose in the box of the two *danseuses* when the identity of the beautiful stranger with La Torpille was clearly made out by them.

"Ah, *ça!* where does she come from?" said Marietta to Madame du Val-Noble. "I thought she had gone under, — swamped."

"Is it really she? She seems to me three dozen times younger, and far more beautiful than six years ago."

"Perhaps she has been preserved, like Madame d'Espard and Madame Zayonchek, in ice," said Philippe Bridau, now called the Comte de Brambourg, laughing.

This parvenu had brought the three women to the theatre, where they occupied a box on the lower tier.

"Is n't she the rat you talked of sending me to get possession of my uncle?" said Philippe to Tullia.

"Precisely," replied Tullia. "Du Bruel, go down into the stalls and see if it is really she."

"What a head she carries!" exclaimed Madame du Val-Noble, using an expression in the vocabulary of such women, which means, "Look at the airs she gives herself."

"Oh," cried the Comte de Brambourg, "she has the right to, for she is with my friend Baron de Nucingen! I 'll go to their box myself."

"Perhaps she's that pretended Joan of Arc who has conquered Nucingen, about whom we've been bored to death for the last three months," said Mariette.

"Good evening, my dear baron," said Philippe Bridau, entering Esther's box. "So here you are, married to Mademoiselle Esther. Mademoiselle, I'm a poor officer whom you once consented to get out of a difficulty at Issoudun, — Philippe Bridau."

"Don't know him," said Esther, sweeping the audience with her opera-glass.

"Mademoiselle," interposed the baron, "is not called Esther any longer. Her name is now Madame de Champy, from a little property which I have bought for her."

"Those ladies over there," said Philippe, "are complaining that she gives herself airs. If you do not choose to remember me," he said to Esther, "will you deign to recognize Mariette, Tullia, and Madame du Val-Noble?"

"If those ladies are civil to me, I am disposed to be civil to them," replied Esther, shortly.

"Civil! why, they are all that's amiable. They have christened you Joan of Arc."

Philippe Bridau hastened back to Mariette's box with his report.

"Let us go and see her," proposed Tullia.

"Faith, no!" cried Mariette; "she's too handsome. I'll go and see her in her own house."

"I think I'm handsome enough to risk it," replied Tullia.

Accordingly, at the next *entr'acte*, Tullia went to Esther's box and renewed acquaintance with her. Esther, however, kept to generalities.

"Where do you come from, dear child?" asked the *danseuse*, who was bursting with curiosity.

"Oh! I was five years in a château among the Alps, with an Englishman as jealous as a tiger, — a nabob; I called him *nabot*, for he was n't bigger than a shrimp. And now I've fallen to a banker, *de caraïbe en syllabe*, as Florine used to say. But here I am back in Paris, with dreams of amusement that will make a regular carnival of life! I'll keep open house. Ah! I've five years of solitude to make up. Five years of an Englishman is too much; they ought to be played 'for six weeks only,' as the posters say."

"Did the baron give you that lace?"

"No, a relic of the nabob. But fancy what ill-luck, my dear; he was as ghastly as a friend's smile at our success, and I thought to be sure he'd die in six months. Pooh! he proved to be as rugged as the Alps. Always distrust men who say they have something the matter with their liver. I don't wish ever to hear about livers again; I've too much faith in proverbs. My nabob robbed me; he died without making a will, and the family turned me out as if I had the plague. So the banker will have to pay double. Ah! you are right to call me Joan of Arc; I've lost England, and perhaps I'll die at the stake, burned —"

"Of love?" said Tullia.

"Alive!" replied Esther, dreamily.

A few days later, Esther, who had been driving in the Champs Élysées, met Madame du Val-Noble in the alley which runs at right angles to the drive, where, at that time, people left their carriages to walk up and down if the weather was fine and dry.

"Well, dear child," said Esther, after they had talked for a while, "come and see me soon. Nucingen dines with me to-morrow, and I want you." Then she whispered in her ear, "I do what I like with him, for he has n't that!" She put one of her gloved nails under her front teeth, and made the well-known gesture, which means, "not a thing!"

"You are sure of him?"

"My dear, he has so far only paid my debts."

"How mean!" cried the other.

"Oh," said Esther, "I owed enough to scare the minister of finance! But now he has promised me an investment in Funds for thirty thousand francs a year on the day I take possession of his house. Oh, he 's charming! I have n't a word to say against him; he 'll do! Next week we shall have the house-warming, and you must come. In the morning he is to give me the investment in the Funds, for I could n't begin to live in such a house as that without an income. I 've known poverty, and I don't mean ever to come to it again."

"You, who used to say, 'Fortune is I, myself!' how you have changed," said Susanne du Val-Noble.

"Well, it is living in Switzerland; everybody gets miserly there. Go there yourself, my dear; catch a Swiss. In fact, you might marry one, for they don't know anything as yet about women of our kind. But anyhow you 'll come back, as I have, in love with the Grand Livre and a good income — such a delicate, honest love! Come and see me soon. Adieu."

During this time the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera had his passport viséd at the Spanish embassy, and was

arranging all things at the house on the quai Malaquais preparatory to a journey to Madrid. For this reason: In a few days Esther would remove to the house in the rue Saint-Georges, and become possessed of the investment in the Funds representing thirty thousand francs a year. Europe and Asia were charged with the duty of making her sell out the stock and remit the proceeds to Lucien. Lucien, supposed to be enriched by the liberality of his sister, could thus pay off the whole cost of the Rubempré estate. No one could find a flaw in such conduct. Esther alone could be indiscreet, and she, he knew, would die sooner than let the truth escape her. Clotilde had appeared in church wearing the pink ribbon tied round her crane-like throat, so that the difficulties at the hôtel de Grandlieu were conquered. Carlos, by disappearing for a time, would divert all danger to Lucien if there were, as he now suspected, malevolent persons on his traces. In short, human prudence had foreseen all. There was no weak spot; no miscarriage was possible.

The evening before the day on which the abbé was to start, Lucien went, as usual, to the hôtel de Grandlieu. The company was numerous. Before the eyes of the whole salon the duchess kept Lucien beside her for some time, and showed him the greatest kindness.

"You have made a little journey?" she said to him.

"Yes, madame la duchesse. My sister, wishing to facilitate my marriage, has made great sacrifices, and so enabled me to buy the estate of Rubempré, and greatly increase it."

"Is there a house upon it?" asked Clotilde, smiling too eagerly.

"There is something that resembles an old castle," he replied; "but it would be wiser to use the materials in building a modern house."

Clotilde's eyes flashed with happiness in addition to the contentment on her lips.

"You are to play a rubber to-night with my father," she said to him in a low voice. "Before long you will certainly be invited to dinner."

"Well, my dear monsieur," said the Duc du Grandlieu, "you have bought, I am told, the estate of Rubempré. I congratulate you; it is a conclusive answer to those who declared you were in debt."

"Ah, monsieur le duc, I still owe half the purchase-money!"

"Well, you must marry a girl with a fortune. But you will hardly find one in our faubourg; we cannot afford to give such dowries to our daughters."

"They have dowry enough in their name," replied Lucien.

"We are only three at whist to-night, Maufrigneuse, d'Espard, and I," said the duke; "will you make the fourth," he added, showing Lucien the whist-table.

Clotilde sat down beside her father to watch his play.

"She wishes me to take this attention to myself," said the duke, tapping his daughter's hand, and looking toward Lucien, who remained serious.

Lucien was partner to Monsieur d'Espard, and lost twenty louis.

"My dear mother," whispered Clotilde to her mother, "he has had the tact to lose."

At eleven o'clock, after exchanging a few words of

love with Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, Lucien returned home, and went to bed thinking of the complete triumph he had obtained in one short month; for there was no longer any doubt of his acceptance as Clotilde's suitor, and their marriage before the Lent of 1830.

The next morning, as he was smoking his cigarettes after breakfast in company with the abbé, who was thoughtful and seemingly very anxious, the servant announced Monsieur de Saint-Denis, a gentleman who desired to speak either with the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera, or with Monsieur de Rubempré.

"Did n't they say below that I had left Paris?" cried the abbé.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the groom.

"Then you must receive the man," he said to Lucien. "Be careful not to say a single compromising word, nor let a gesture, even of surprise, escape you. I am certain this is the enemy."

"You shall hear me," replied Lucien.

Carlos concealed himself in the adjoining room, and through the crack he saw a man well known to him enter the salon, although he only fully recognized him by his voice; for Corentin — such was the man's name — possessed the gift of transformation. At this moment he resembled an old head-clerk in the Treasury department.

Corentin, whom we have met already in other scenes, was, with a certain Peyrade, at the head of the political police of France. The Revolution had no police; it needed none. Espionage, then universal, was called civism. The Directory, with a rather better regulated government than that of the

Committee of Public Safety, was obliged to reconstitute a police, — a work which the First Consul completed by the creation of the prefecture of police and the ministry of police. Corentin, in conjunction with Peyrade, created the staff of the new department. In 1808 the immense services of these men were rewarded by the appointment of Peyrade as commissary-general of police at Antwerp, while Corentin remained at the head of the police of France both political and judiciary. This position he retained after and during the Restoration. The ministry, made aware of some plot or machination, would say, "How much do you need for such or such results?" and Corentin, after careful estimation, would reply, "Twenty, thirty, forty thousand francs," as the case might be. Then, when the word was once given to go to work, the means and the men to be employed were left to the choice and judgment of Corentin, or the agents whom he selected. This was the system under which the judiciary police was conducted for the discovery of crime in the days of Vidocq. From 1817 to 1822 it sometimes happened that Corentin was employed to watch the ministry itself. The ministry, having perfect confidence in him, would set him to watch the men who were watching them, — a circumstance which used to make Louis XVIII. smile. Corentin's private office was known only to the ministry of police, and one or two other persons. There he received the personages whom the ministry or the king employed as intermediaries in serious affairs; but no agent or sub-official ever came there. He had other quarters for the transaction of his regular police-work. In this secret room plans were concocted and resolu-

tions taken which would have furnished strange annals and curious dramas could the walls have spoken. There, from 1816 to 1826, vast interests were analyzed and discussed. There were unfolded, in their germ, events which later bore heavily on France. There Corentin and his friend Peyrade said to each other after 1819, "If Louis XVIII. does not choose to strike such or such a blow, or get rid of such a prince, it is because he execrates his brother. He wants to bequeath to him a revolution." [1]

Corentin had seen the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera on several occasions, and observed his glance, which could never be forgotten; also the square structure of the powerful shoulders, and the bloating of the face. On the previous night, when the abbé had been out in the disguise of a sheriff's officer, Corentin had met him. He was just about to get into a hackney coach.

"Eh, Monsieur l'abbé!" cried Corentin, suddenly. Carlos turned his head, saw Corentin, whom he knew but too well, and jumped into the carriage. Corentin, however, had time to say, through the door: —

"That's all I want to know. Quai Malaquais," he called out to the driver, with infernal mischief in his tone and look.

"Ha!" said Jacques Collin to himself as he drove away, "I'm sold; they are on me. It is a question of being quicker than they; but I must know first what they want of us."

[1] The part omitted in this volume relates the manœuvres of police and criminals in connection with this plot of Jacques Collin, whose real identity, however, was not as yet known to the police. — Tr.

"I have not the honor of being known to you, monsieur," said Corentin to Lucien as he entered the room; "but —"

"Excuse me for interrupting you, monsieur," said Lucien; "but —"

"But the matter concerns your marriage with Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu, which will not take place," said Corentin, quickly. (Lucien sat down and said nothing.) "You are in the power of a man who has the means, the will, and the intention of proving to the Duc de Grandlieu that the estate of Rubempré will be paid for by a fool to whom you have sold your mistress, Mademoiselle Esther. The minutes of the proceedings against her for debt are easily procurable; also we have means of making d'Estourny and his agent Cérizet speak out. The manœuvres — extremely clever ones — against the Baron de Nucingen will be brought to light. At this moment, however, the matter can be arranged. Pay one hundred thousand francs, and you will be left in peace. This payment does not concern me. I am simply the agent of those who are practising this blackmail; that is all."

Corentin might have talked for an hour. Lucien smoked his cigarettes with perfect equanimity.

"Monsieur," he replied, when Corentin paused, "I do not wish to know who you are, for men who undertake such commissions have no name, — at any rate, none for me. I have allowed you to say what you had to say unchecked, for I am in my own house. You seem to me not devoid of sense; therefore listen to my dilemma." (A pause ensued, during which Lucien met with an icy glance the cat-like eyes which Corentin

fixed on him.) "Either you are relying on statements that are absolutely false, and I ought to take no notice of them, or you are right in what you state; in which case, by giving you one hundred thousand francs I also give you the power to ask me for as many hundred thousands as you can find Saint-Denises to come and ask for them. In short, to put an end in one sentence to your very worthy negotiation, you are to know that I, Lucien de Rubempré, fear no man, inasmuch as I have nothing to do with such swindling as you speak of. I may add that, if the family of Grandlieu make difficulties, there are other young women of high rank who are marriageable; and, in any case, there is no offence to me in remaining a bachelor."

"If Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera —"

"Monsieur," said Lucien, interrupting Corentin, "the Abbé Carlos Herrera is at this moment on the road to Spain. He has nothing to do with my marriage, nor anything to say about my affairs. He is a diplomatist who has kindly helped me for some time past with his advice; but he has reports to make to his Majesty the King of Spain, and if you wish to speak to him you must follow him to Madrid."

"Monsieur," said Corentin, curtly, "you will never be the husband of Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu."

"So much the worse for her," replied Lucien, impatiently, urging Corentin to the door.

"Have you fully reflected?" said Corentin, coldly.

"Monsieur, I recognize neither your right to meddle in my affairs nor to make me lose a cigarette," replied Lucien, flinging away his extinguished cigarette.

"Adieu, monsieur," said Corentin. "You will not see me again; but there will, assuredly, come a moment in your life when you would give half your fortune to have had the thought of recalling me from that staircase."

In reply to this threat the abbé made a sign of cutting a man's throat.

"Now, to work!" he cried, looking at Lucien, who had turned livid when the terrible conference was over.

## XIII.

### THINGS THAT MAY BE SUFFERED ON THE THRESHOLD OF A DOOR.

No immediate events followed this scene. The abbé, ostensibly gone to Spain, went really as far as Tours. There he sent his carriage on to Bordeaux, with a trusty subordinate in it to play the part of master, and await him in an inn in that town. He himself returned, dressed as a commercial traveller, to Paris, where he was secretly installed in the rue Taitbout, whence, by means of Asia, Europe, and Paccard, he directed his machinations, and watched every one, more especially Corentin.

Esther, meantime, continued conscientiously her rôle of Pompadour to the prince of speculation. She gave two or three little parties solely for the purpose of inviting Lucien to the house. Lousteau, Rastignac, du Tillet, Bixiou, Nathan, the Comte de Brambourg, — the most dissipated young men of the day, — were its *habitués*; and Esther finally accepted, as actresses in the drama she was now playing, Tullia, Florentine, Fanny-Beaupré, Florine, and Madame du Val-Noble. In six weeks time Esther became the wittiest, most amusing, handsomest, and most elegant of the female pariahs who compose the class to which she now belonged. She tasted all the enjoyments of vanity which seduce such women, but a secret thought put

her above her caste. She kept in her heart an image of herself which was at once her shame and her glory. The hour of her abdication was ever present to her thoughts; she lived a double life, holding her present self in pity. Her sarcasms were the outward sign of her deep contempt and horror for the infamous and odious rôle played by the body in presence of the soul. Spectator and actor, judge and criminal, she embodied that wonderful fiction of the Arabian tales, in which a sublime being appears in a loathsome person, a type which we all know under the name of Nebuchadnezzar in that book of books, the Bible.

The opening of the house in the place Saint-Georges had been postponed by her on various pretexts from time to time, but it was now fixed, with its attendant fête, for the day after the first masked ball of the season. About a fortnight before the day, Esther was, as usual, at the Opera. She had selected her box at a point from which she could command that of Madame de Sérizy, whom Lucien was in the habit of accompanying. The poor girl put all her happiness into the power of looking at him on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the Opera nights. On this occasion, about half-past nine o'clock, she saw him enter Madame de Sérizy's box with a pale and anxious face that was almost distorted. These signs of inward wretchedness were visible to her alone. The knowledge of the face of a man by the woman who loves him is that of a mariner about the ocean.

"Good God! what has happened?" she thought; "what distresses him? Will he want to see that infernal man, — but a guardian-angel to him? Could I get word to Asia, in whose room he is hiding?"

Full of such painful thoughts, she scarcely listened to the music, nor to the baron, who was holding a hand of his "anchel" in both of his, and talking to her in his Polish-Jewish jargon that was sometimes incomprehensible.

"Esther," he suddenly cried, pushing away her hand with some ill-humor, "you are not listening to me!"

"Baron, you gabble love as you do your shocking French."

"The devil!"

"I am not in my boudoir; I am at the Opera. And if you were not one of those iron safes made by Huret, metamorphosed into a man by some trick of nature, you would n't make such a disturbance in the box of a woman who loves music. You keep rustling my gown like a cockchafer on paper."

"How ungrateful you are!" cried the baron.

"Ungrateful!" she exclaimed. "What have you given me up to this time? Much annoyance. Do you think I 'm proud of you? You are proud of me, I know; I wear your buttons and your livery well enough. You 've paid my debts, that 's true; but look how you filch millions. Ah! you need n't make faces at me; you told me so yourself. Prostitute and thief, we could n't be better matched. You have bought a magnificent cage for a parrot whom you fancied. Go and ask a Brazilian macaw if it owes gratitude to a man who keeps it in a gilded cage. Don't look at me in that way; you remind me of a Chinese bonze. You show your red and white macaw to all Paris, and call out, 'Is there any one here who possesses such a fine poll-parrot? Just hear it talk!

You 'd really think there was sense in its words; when du Tillet comes in it says, "How do, old cheat?"' You say you want my heart. Well, come, I 'll tell you a way to get it."

"Tell me, tell me! I 'll do anything for you; I like to have you *blague*[1] me in this way."

"Be young, be handsome, be like Lucien de Rubempré, who is over there in Madame de Sérizy's box, and you will obtain gratis what you can never buy with all your millions."

"I shall go home, for you are really execrable to-night," said the lynx, whose face elongated as he went to the door and opened it.

"Here, Nucingen!" said Esther, recalling him with an imperious gesture.

The baron returned with a servility that was almost canine.

"Do you want me to be nice to you and pet you, old monster?"

"You break my heart."

"Prake your heart!" she cried, imitating his accent. "What do you know of a broken heart? But I want you to go over there and bring Lucien here to me; I wish to invite him to Belshazzar's feast, and make sure that he comes. Now, if you succeed in that little negotiation, I 'll tell you I love you so plainly, my old Frédéric, that you 'll actually believe it."

[1] The word *blague* cannot be translated, nor its meaning given by any English word or term. It has a hundred meanings in the French. It is talk, — reckless, witty, ironical, chaffing, boastful, whimsical, free to license, the vehicle of which is bohemian slang. — Tr.

"You are a witch," said the baron, kissing her glove. "I 'd listen for an hour to your insults for a sweet word at the end."

"Then obey me," she said, "or —" and she threatened him with her finger as you might a child.

The baron shook his head like a bird caught in a net which implores the hunter's pity.

"Oh! what can be the matter with Lucien?" she said to herself when left alone, the tears she had been retaining dropping from her eyes. "Never, never, did he look so sad as that!"

Something had indeed happened to Lucien that very evening. He had gone, as usual, in his coupé to the hôtel de Grandlieu. Reserving his saddle-horse and his cab-horse for the mornings, he had, like other fashionable young men, a coupé for the winter evenings, chosen from those of the best carriage-maker, and drawn by fine horses. All things smiled upon him: he had dined three times at the hôtel de Grandlieu; the duke was charming to him; the Omnibus shares, sold at treble their cost, had enabled him to pay off another third on the cost of his estate; Clotilde de Grandlieu, who now appeared in charming toilets, beamed joyously upon him when he entered the salon, and openly avowed her love. Persons in high places talked of the marriage as a probable thing. The Duc de Chaulieu, formerly ambassador to Spain, and now minister of foreign affairs, promised the Duchesse de Grandlieu to ask the King to bestow the title of marquis upon Monsieur de Rubempré.

After dining with Madame de Sérizy, Lucien had gone, as we have said, to pay his usual evening visit

at the hôtel de Grandlieu. He arrived there; his coachman called for the gate to open, and he reached the portico. As Lucien got out of his coupé he saw four or five other carriages waiting in the court-yard. Seeing Monsieur de Rubempré, one of the footmen opened and shut the door of the peristyle, and came forward, standing with his back to the door, like a soldier on guard.

"His Grace is not at home," he said.

"Madame la duchesse receives," observed Lucien.

"Madame la duchesse is out," replied the footman, gravely.

"Mademoiselle Clotilde —"

"I don't think that mademoiselle would receive monsieur in the absence of Madame la duchesse."

"But I see there is company," said Lucien, confounded.

"I don't know," said the man, trying to seem stupid and yet respectful.

There is nothing more terrible than etiquette to those who admit it to be the most formidable law of social life. Lucien saw the meaning of this scene, disastrous to him, — the duke and duchess refused to receive him. He felt the marrow of his spinal cord freezing in the sections of his vertebral column; a cold sweat beaded his brow. This colloquy had taken place before his own valet, who held the handle of the carriage door, in doubt whether to close it. Lucien signed to him that he was going away; but as he got into the coupé he heard the sound of persons coming out on the portico, and a servant called out, "The carriage of Monsieur le Duc de Chaulieu." "Quick!" cried Lucien to his

valet, "to the Opera!" But in spite of his haste the unfortunate man could not avoid the Duc de Chaulieu and his son, the Duc de Rhétoré, to whom he was forced to bow, although they did not speak to him.

"How can I get word of this disaster to Carlos, to my only adviser," thought Lucien. "What has happened? What will happen?" His mind wandered away into conjectures.

Here is what had happened.

That morning, at eleven o'clock, the Duc de Grandlieu, on entering the little salon where the family breakfasted, had said to Clotilde: —

"My child, until you hear more from me, you must not think again of the Sieur de Rubempré."

Then he took the duchesse aside, and said a few words to her in a low voice, which made poor Clotilde turn pale, for her mother, on hearing them, showed the utmost surprise.

"Jean," said the duke to one of the servants, "carry this note to the Duc de Chaulieu, and ask him to send an answer, yes or no, by you. I have invited him to dine with us to-day," he said to his wife.

The breakfast was very dismal; the duchess was thoughtful, the duke seemed angry with himself, and Clotilde could scarcely retain her tears.

As soon as the duke had left the room the mother said, tenderly: —

"My child, your father is doing right; obey him. I cannot tell you, as he did, not to think of Lucien. No, I understand your grief too well." (Clotilde kissed her mother's hands.) "But I do say to you,

my angel, wait! Make no move; suffer in silence, since you love him, and trust to the wisdom and solicitude of your parents. Women of our station, my child, are great ladies because they know how to do their duty on all occasions, and do it nobly."

"But what has caused this?" asked Clotilde, as white as a lily.

"Things that cannot be told to you, dear heart," replied the duchess, "for if they are false, your mind would be uselessly soiled; if true, you should be ignorant of them."

At six o'clock the Duc de Chaulieu entered the Duc de Grandlieu's study.

"Henri," said the latter, "I am in such difficulty that I can only take counsel of an old friend like you, who knows the world and deals with it. My daughter Clotilde loves, as you know, that little Rubempré, whom they have almost persuaded me to accept as her husband. I have always been against the marriage; but the fact is Madame de Grandlieu has not been able to withstand Clotilde's feelings. When the young man bought his property, and paid three-fourths of the purchase-money, I felt I could not make any further objection. But last night I received an anonymous letter, in which I am told that the young man's money comes from an impure source, and that he lied to us in saying that his sister had given him the funds necessary to the purchase of the property. I am advised, in the interests of my daughter's happiness and our family credit, to make inquiries, and the means are suggested to me. But I distrust and despise all anonymous letters. Here, read it yourself."

"I share your opinion of anonymous letters, my dear Ferdinand," said the Duc de Chaulieu when he had read the letter; "but while we despise them it is best to use them. There are cases in which we must treat such letters as we do spies. Close your doors to the young man for the present, and make inquiries. Your lawyer is Derville, — a man in whom we all have confidence; he has the secrets of many families, and he can be trusted with this. He is an upright man, — a man of weight and honor; also he is very shrewd and wary. But you will want another man with him, more accustomed to detective duty, and we have one at the ministry of foreign affairs who is without his equal for discovering secrets of state. We often send him on missions. Let Derville know that he will have a lieutenant in ferreting out this matter. Our spy is a *monsieur,* who will present himself with the cross of the Legion of honor, and has all the appearance of a diplomat. He will do the hunting, and Derville can assist in the chase; after which they will be able to tell you if the mountain has given birth to a mouse, or whether you must get rid of that young Rubempré. A week ought to be enough for the inquiry."

"The young man is not marquis enough yet to take offence at my shutting my doors on him for a week," said the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Especially if you give him your daughter afterwards," said the minister. "And if the anonymous letter tells the truth, what do you care if he is affronted or not? If the statements are true, you must send Clotilde to travel with my daughter-in-law Madeleine, who wants to go to Italy."

"You pull me out of trouble," said the Duc de Grandlieu. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Wait for the result."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Duc de Grandlieu, "what is the name of your man? I must tell it to Derville. Send him here at four o'clock to-morrow, and I 'll have Derville on hand, and put them in communication."

"The real name of the man is, I believe, Corentin (a name you never heard of); but the gentleman will make his appearance here under his ministerial name. He calls himself Monsieur de Saint something or other. Ah, Saint-Ives! No, Saint-Valère, — one or the other."

After this conference the majordomo of the mansion received orders to close the doors to Monsieur de Rubempré, which, as we have seen, was done.

Lucien walked about the foyer of the Opera-house like a drunken man. He saw himself the talk of all Paris. In the Duc de Rhétoré he had, as he knew, one of those pitiless enemies on whom we are compelled to smile, unable to avenge ourselves, because their attacks are conformed to the laws of society. The Duc de Rhétoré knew of the scene that had just taken place on the portico of the hôtel de Grandlieu. Lucien felt the absolute necessity of informing his guardian-counsellor, now hiding in the rue Taitbout, of this sudden disaster, yet he was afraid of compromising himself by going to Esther's house where there might be company. He was so beside himself that he forgot that Esther was in the Opera-house. In the midst of all these terrible perplexities, Rastignac, knowing nothing as yet of what had happened, came

*"'What is it, my Lucien?' she said in his ear the moment that the door closed on Nucingen."*

Georges Cain

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Frederic Lingt

up to congratulate him on his approaching marriage. At that instant Nucingen approached him smiling, and said: —

"Will you do me the pleasure to come and see Madame de Champy? She wants to invite you herself to our house-warming."

"Willingly, baron," replied Lucien, to whom the banker appeared for a moment like a saving angel.

"Leave us," said Esther to the baron when he reappeared with Lucien; "go and see Madame du Val-Noble, whom I see over there in a box on the third tier."

"What is it, my Lucien?" she said in his ear the moment that the door closed on Nucingen.

"I am lost! They have just refused me entrance at the hôtel de Grandlieu, under pretext that the duke and duchess were not at home, when there were four or five carriages in the court-yard."

"What! the marriage broken off!" said Esther in a faltering voice, for a vision of paradise rose before her.

"I don't yet know what is on foot against me."

"My Lucien," she said in a voice adorably caressing, "why be so grieved? You can make a better marriage later."

"Invite a number of us to supper to-night, so that I can speak secretly to Carlos —"

Lucien suddenly stopped, and made a gesture of despair.

"What is the matter?" said the poor girl, who felt as though she was in a furnace.

"Madame de Sérizy sees me here!" cried Lucien;

"and worst of all, the Duc de Rhétoré, who witnessed my rebuff, is with her."

At that moment the young duke was saying to Madame de Sérizy, "Why do you let Lucien show himself in the box of Mademoiselle Esther? You take an interest in him, and you ought to warn him that such things are not admissible. He may sup with her if he chooses; but, really, I am no longer surprised that the Grandlieus have given him up. I saw him refused to-night at their door, on the portico."

"Those women are very dangerous," said Madame de Sérizy, with her lorgnette turned full on Esther's box. "They'll ruin him."

"Oh, no!" said the duke, "instead of costing him money, they would give it to him if he needed it. All women run after him."

"Well," said Esther, "come to supper at midnight, and bring Blondet and Rastignac. Have two amusing men at any rate, and don't let us be more than nine."

When Lucien returned to Madame de Sérizy's box, instead of turning her face to him and smiling, and drawing back her dress to make room for him, she continued to gaze at the audience through her opera-glass; but Lucien saw by the trembling of the lorgnette that the countess was angrily agitated. Nevertheless, he walked down to the front of the box, and seated himself in the other corner of it, leaving a little space between Madame de Sérizy and himself. He leaned over the edge of the box, with his elbow on the cushion, and his chin in his gloved hand. Then he turned to a three-quarter position, and waited to be addressed. By the middle of the third act the countess

had not only not spoken, but she had not even looked at him.

"I don't know," she said at last, "why you are here; your proper place is in Mademoiselle Esther's box."

"I am going there," said Lucien, who rose and left the box without even glancing at the countess.

## XIV.

### ONE OF CORENTIN'S MANY MOUSE-TRAPS.

Corentin, coming in from his country-house at Passy, presented himself before the Duc de Grandlieu on the following day. In a buttonhole of his black coat was the ribbon of the Legion of honor. He had made himself the face of a little old man, with powdered hair, much wrinkled, and very wan. His eyes were hidden by tortoise-shell spectacles. He had the air and manner of the head-clerk in some government office. When he had given his name (Monsieur de Saint-Denis) he was conducted to the duke's study, where he found Derville reading the letter he had dictated himself to one of his own agents, whose business it was to write the office letters.

The duke took Corentin apart to explain all that Corentin knew. Monsieur de Saint-Denis listened coldly and respectfully, amusing himself by studying this great seigneur, penetrating to the man beneath the velvet, and turning inside out to his own mind the being whose sole occupation in life was, then and always, whist and the contemplation of the family of Grandlieu. Great seigneurs are so naïve and simple-minded with their inferiors that Corentin had not many questions to put to the duke to elicit his superciliousness.

"If you will take my advice, monsieur," Corentin

said to Derville, after being duly presented to him, "we had better leave to-night for Angoulême by the Bordeaux diligence, which goes quite as fast as the mail. Six hours will get us all the information that Monsieur le duc requires. Did I understand your Grace to say that it would suffice to ascertain whether the sister and brother-in-law of Monsieur de Rubempré had been able to give him twelve hundred thousand francs?" he added, looking at the duke.

"You have understood me perfectly," replied the peer.

"We can be back here in four days," said Corentin, turning to Derville. "Not so long an absence that the affairs of either will suffer."

"That was the only objection I made to his Grace," said Derville. "It is four o'clock; I will return home to say a word to my head-clerk and pack my travelling-bag, and after dinner I will be at — But are we sure of places?" he said to Monsieur Saint-Denis, interrupting himself.

"I'll answer for that," said Corentin. "Be in the court-yard of the Messageries du Grand-Bureau at eight o'clock. If there are no places I shall make some; for that is how monseigneur the Duc de Grandlieu must be served."

"Messieurs," said the duke, with much grace, "I do not thank you now."

Corentin and the lawyer, taking that speech as their dismissal, bowed and went away. At half-past eight o'clock Monsieur de Saint-Denis and Derville, seated in the coupé of the diligence to Bordeaux, were observing each other in silence as they left Paris. The

next morning, between Orléans and Tours, Derville, who was bored, seemed disposed to talk, and Corentin deigned to amuse him, keeping at the same time his distance; he allowed the lawyer to think that he belonged to the diplomatic body, and expected to be made a consul-general by the influence of the Duc de Grandlieu. Two days after their departure from Paris, Corentin and Derville stopped at Mansle, much to the astonishment of the lawyer, who expected to go to Angoulême.

"We shall get more accurate information about Madame Séchard in this little town than in Angoulême," said Corentin.

"Do you know her?" asked Derville, surprised to find his companion so well informed.

"No, but I made the conductor talk, finding that he came from Angoulême. He tells me that Madame Séchard lives at Marsac, which is only three miles from Mansle; and I think we shall be able to get at the truth here rather than in Angoulême."

"Well, after all," thought Derville, "I am only employed, as the duke told me, to witness the inquiries made by this confidential man of his."

The inn at Mansle, called "La Belle-Étoile," had for its landlord one of those fat, gross men, whom we hardly expect to see alive on our return, but who are still, ten years later, on the threshold of their door, with the same amount of flesh, the same cotton nightcap, the same apron, the same knife, the same greasy hair, the same triple chin, — landlords who are stereotyped in all romance, from the immortal Cervantes to the immortal Walter Scott. Always boasting of their

kitchen; always having everything that you want to feed you, — promises which culminate in an emaciated chicken and vegetables cooked with rancid butter. Each and all vaunt their fine wines, and force you to drink the *vin du pays.* But, from his youth up, Corentin had learned to extract from an innkeeper more essential things than doubtful dishes and apocryphal wines. He accordingly gave himself out for a man very easy to please, who trusted implicitly to the best cook at Mansle, as he remarked to the fat landlord.

"I have no difficulty in being the best, for I 'm the only one," said the host.

"Serve us in a side room," said Corentin, winking at Derville, "and above all, don't be afraid of setting fire to your chimney; we want to get the numbness out of our limbs."

"It was n't hot in the coupé," remarked Derville.

"How far is it from here to Marsac?" asked Corentin, addressing the innkeeper's wife, who descended from the upper regions on hearing that the diligence had unloaded two travellers intending to sleep at the inn.

"Monsieur, are you going to Marsac?" inquired the hostess.

"I don't know," he replied, shortly. "Is it far from here to Marsac?" he asked again, giving the woman time to notice the red ribbon in his buttonhole.

"If you drive, it takes a short half-hour," she said.

"Do you think that Monsieur and Madame Séchard are there in winter?"

"Of course, — they live there all the year round."

"It is now five o'clock. Shall we be likely to find them still up at nine?"

"Oh, yes, till ten o'clock, certainly! They have company every evening, — the curé and Monsieur Marron, the doctor."

"They are very worthy people, are they not?" asked Derville.

"Oh, monsieur, yes, the very cream!" replied the innkeeper's wife, — "good, upright people, not ambitious, no! Monsieur Séchard, though he has enough to live on comfortably, might have had millions, so they say, if he had n't let himself be robbed of an invention he made about paper-making; the Cointet Brothers profited by that."

"Ah, yes, the Cointet Brothers!" said Corentin.

"Hold your tongue, wife!" said the landlord. "What do these gentlemen care whether Monsieur Séchard got his patent or not; they are not paper-dealers. If you intend to pass the night with me at La Belle-Étoile," said the man, addressing the travellers, "here 's the book in which I will ask you to write your names. We have a constable at Mansle who has nothing to do, and spends his time plaguing us."

"The devil! I thought the Séchards were very rich," said Corentin, while Derville wrote their names and his own description as barrister to the Civil Court of the Seine.

"Some folks do say they are millionnaires," replied the landlord; "but to stop tongues from wagging is like trying to keep the river from running. Père Séchard left two hundred thousand in lands, so they say;

and that 's pretty good for a man who began as a workman. Perhaps he had as much more in savings; for he ended in getting an income of ten or twelve thousand francs from his property, and it is not to be supposed he was such a fool as to neglect to put his savings out at interest as he made them. But if he did, as some say he did, dabble in usury, three hundred thousand francs was as much as he ever handled, and that ain't a million. I wish I had the difference between them, and I would n't be here now keeping the Belle-Étoile."

"Is it possible?" said Corentin. "I was told that Monsieur David Séchard and wife had fully two or three millions."

"Goodness!" cried the wife, "that 's all they say the Cointets have after robbing him of his invention, for which they only paid him twenty thousand francs. Where do you suppose such honest people as the Séchards could get a million? They were very poor in the lifetime of the old man. Without Kolb, who is now their bailiff, and Madame Kolb, who are both devoted to them, they would hardly have had bread to eat. What had they when they went to live at La Verberie? Three thousand francs a year at most."

Corentin took Derville aside.

"*In vino veritas*, — truth in taverns. For my part, I consider an inn the best civil court in the land; a notary does n't know more of what goes on in a small place than a landlord. Just see how we are supposed to know 'the Cointets,' and 'Kolb,' etc. A tavern-keeper is the living record of all adventures; he 's the police himself without knowing it. The government

does n't need more than two hundred detectives at the most in a country like France, where there are ten million honest spies. We are not obliged, however, to trust this report, though they would be certain to know in this little place if twelve hundred thousand francs had been taken out of it to pay for the Rubempré estate. We need not stay here long — "

"I hope not," said Derville.

"For this reason," continued Corentin: "I have found the most natural way in the world to get the truth from Séchard and his wife. I rely on you to support my little scheme with the weight of your authority as notary, for it will bring forth a clear and succinct account of their fortune. After dinner we shall drive over to see Monsieur Séchard," he said to the hostess. "Be sure that our beds are prepared; we require two rooms."

"Dinner is ready, messieurs," said the landlord.

"Where the devil could that young man have got his money?" said Derville to Corentin, as they took their places at table. "Can that anonymous letter be true? Do you suppose it was the money of some mistress?"

"Ah, that's the subject of another inquiry!" said Corentin. "Lucien de Rubempré lives, so the Duc de Chaulieu tells me, with a converted Jewess, who passes for being Dutch, and calls herself Esther van Bogseck."

"What a singular coincidence," said the lawyer. "I am searching for the heiress of a Dutchman named Gobseck; it is the same name with a transfer of consonants."

"Well," said Corentin, "you shall have full information as to the relationship on my return to Paris."

An hour later the two emissaries of the house of Grandlieu started for La Verberie, the home of Monsieur and Madame David Séchard.

Never had Lucien experienced such emotion as that which took possession of his soul at La Verberie when comparing his fate with that of his early friend and brother-in-law. The two Parisians were now to see the same scene as that which, a few days earlier, had so affected Lucien. In the first place, the whole atmosphere was that of peace and plenty. At the hour when the two strangers arrived, the salon of La Verberie was occupied by a little coterie of four persons, — namely, the rector of Marsac, — a young priest, twenty-five years of age, who, at Madame Séchard's earnest request, was the tutor of her only son Lucien; the doctor of the neighborhood, Monsieur Marron; the mayor of the township; and an old colonel, retired from service, who cultivated roses on a small estate situated opposite to La Verberie on the other side of the road. Every evening in winter these persons came to play an innocent boston, at a farthing a stake, and obtain the newspapers, or return those they had read. When Monsieur and Madame Séchard bought La Verberie, — a pretty house, built of tufa, and roofed with slate, — its only pleasure-ground was a small garden of about two acres. With time, and with the fruits of her economy, the beautiful Madame Séchard had extended the garden to a little water-course by sacrificing a vineyard, which she bought and transformed into lawn and shrubberies. At the present time, La

Verberie, surrounded by a park of twenty acres, inclosed with walls, was considered the most important estate in the neighborhood. The house of the late Séchard and its dependencies was only used for the working of some twenty acres of vineyard, left by the old man, besides six farms, each bringing in about six thousand francs, of ten acres apiece, situated on the other side of the water-course, exactly opposite to the park of La Verberie.

Already the country people were calling La Verberie "the château," and Ève Séchard was usually spoken of as "la dame de Marsac." In satisfying his social vanity by calling his sister Madame Séchard de Marsac, Lucien had only done as the peasants and the vine-dressers were already doing. Courtois, the proprietor of a mill picturesquely situated at a few stones' throw from La Verberie, was, they said, then in treaty for the sale of this mill to Madame Séchard. This purchase would give to La Verberie its finishing touch as an estate of the first class in the department. Madame Séchard, who did much good, and did it with as much discernment as liberality, was loved and respected. Her beauty, now become magnificent, had reached its highest development. Though nearly twenty-six years of age, she had kept the freshness of youth, thanks to the repose and the abundance afforded by country life. Always in love with her husband, she respected in him a man of talent, sufficiently modest to renounce the loud clamor of fame. To describe her fully, it may suffice to say that, in all her married life, she had never had one heart-throb prompted by aught else than her husband and children.

In six years Lucien had seen his sister three times, and he had only written her at the most six letters. His first visit to La Verberie was at the time of his mother's death, and the last, which had just taken place, was made to ask the favor of the lie so necessary to his present circumstances. It led to a somewhat painful scene between himself and Monsieur and Madame Séchard, who were left with grave and distressing doubts as to their brother's conduct.

The interior of the house, transformed like the exterior, but without luxury, was comfortable. This will be seen by a rapid glance cast into the room where the company were now assembled. A pretty Aubusson carpet on the floor, the walls hung with twilled gray cotton, their panels defined by a cord of green silk, woodwork stained to resemble ironwood, furniture of mahogany, covered with gray cashmere with green trimmings, plant-stands filled with flowers in spite of the season, — all this gave an aspect that was soft and pleasing to the eye. The window curtains of green silk, the drapery of the mantel-shelf, and the frame of the mirrors, were free from the bad taste which spoils so much in the provinces. Even the appropriate and elegant minor details were restful to the soul and to the eye by the sort of poesy which a loving and intelligent woman can and should introduce into her home.

Madame Séchard, still in mourning for her mother, was busy at the corner of the fire with a piece of embroidery, assisted by Madame Kolb, the housekeeper, on whom she relied for all the household details. As the cabriolet containing the two strangers reached the first houses in Marsac, the usual company at La Ver-

berie was increased by the arrival of Courtois, the miller, now a widower, who wanted to retire from business, and hoped to sell his property to the owners of La Verberie, and sell it *well*, because Madame Ève seemed to want it especially, and Courtois knew why.

"Here 's a cabriolet stopping at the door," said Courtois, hearing the sound; "by the rattle I should say it was a country vehicle."

"Very likely Postel and his wife, who have driven over to see us," said the doctor.

"No," said Courtois, "for the vehicle comes from the road to Mansle."

"Matame," said Kolb, a tall and stout Alsacian, opening the door of the salon, "here 's a lawyer from Paris who wants to speak to monsieur."

"A lawyer!" cried Séchard, "the mere word gives me the colic."

"Thank you!" said the mayor of Marsac, named Cachan, a lawyer of twenty years' standing in Angoulême, who was formerly employed to sue David Séchard.

"My poor David will never change; he 'll always be absent-minded," said Ève, smiling.

"A lawyer from Paris?" said Courtois. "Then you have business there?"

"No," said Ève.

"But you have a brother there," said Courtois.

"Take care it is n't about your inheritance from Père Séchard," said Cachan; "many of his doings were very shady, the old man!"

As they entered, Corentin and Derville, after bowing to the company and giving their names, asked

to speak to Madame Séchard and her husband in private.

"Certainly," replied Séchard; "but is it on business?"

"Solely about your inheritance from your father," replied Corentin.

"Then you will please permit Monsieur le maire, who was formerly a lawyer in Angoulême, to be present at the conference."

"Are you Monsieur Derville?" asked Cachan, looking at Corentin.

"No, monsieur; this is he," replied Corentin, motioning to the lawyer, who bowed.

"We are here as one family," said Séchard, "and we have nothing to conceal from our friends; therefore we need not go into my study, where there is no fire. Our life is open to the daylight."

"That of your father, monsieur," said Corentin, "had certain secrets in it which you might not like made known —"

"Is it anything to make us blush?" asked Ève in alarm.

"Oh, no; only a youthful peccadillo," replied Corentin, setting with much care one of his thousand and one little mouse-traps. "Your father gave you an elder brother."

"Ha! the old bear!" cried Courtois. "He never loved you, Monsieur Séchard, and he kept this to come down upon you after his death, the dissembling old fellow! I know now what he meant when he used to say to me, 'You 'll see what you will see when I 'm dead and gone.'"

"Oh, don't be uneasy, monsieur!" said Corentin to Séchard, studying Ève out of the corner of his eye.

"A brother!" cried the doctor, "why, there 's your inheritance divided in halves!"

Derville pretended to be looking at the fine engravings, before lettering, which were hanging on the walls.

"Oh, don't distress yourself, madame!" said Corentin, seeing the surprise depicted on Madame Séchard's beautiful face. "I mean only a natural son. The rights of natural children are not those of legitimate children. This son is in great poverty, and he has a right to a certain sum based on the amount of the inheritance. The millions that your father left —"

At the word *millions* there rose a unanimous cry throughout the salon. Derville stopped looking at the pictures.

"Old Séchard, millions!" ejaculated Courtois. "Who told you that? Some peasant, of course."

"Monsieur," said Cachan, "you don't belong to the Treasury, therefore I presume there is no danger in telling you —"

"Oh, you need n't fear!" said Corentin. "I give you my word of honor that I am not employed in the National Domain office."

Cachan, who had signed to every one to keep quiet, nodded his head with satisfaction.

"Monsieur," continued Corentin, "even if there is only one million, the share of a natural son is a large one. We don't wish to bring a suit; on the contrary, we merely propose that you shall pay us a hundred thousand francs to settle the claim."

"A hundred thousand francs!" cried Cachan, interrupting Corentin. "Why, monsieur, old Séchard left twenty acres of vineyard, five little farms, ten acres of meadow-land in Marsac, and not one farthing with —"

"Not for all the world," cried David Séchard, "will I consent to lie, Monsieur Cachan, and less in a matter of self-interest than in all others. Messieurs," he said to Corentin and Derville, "my father left us, beside his land" (Courtois and Cachan in vain made signs to him), "three hundred thousand francs, which brings the whole value of our inheritance from him to five hundred thousand francs."

"Monsieur Cachan," said Ève Séchard, "what is the share which the law gives to a natural child?"

"Madame," said Corentin, "we are not Turks; we only ask you to swear before these gentlemen that you have not received more than three hundred thousand francs in money from your father's estate. That is all we want."

"First, give us your word of honor," said the former lawyer of Angoulême to Derville, "that you are indeed a lawyer."

"Here is my passport," replied Derville, giving Cachan a paper folded in four. "Monsieur," motioning to Corentin, "is not, as you may think, an inspector-general of the Domains. Make yourself easy," added Derville. "We have merely a strong interest in knowing the truth about the Séchard property, and we now know it."

Derville then took Madame Séchard by the hand, and led her very courteously to the end of the salon.

"Madame," he said in a low voice, "if the honor and future welfare of the house of Grandlieu were not concerned, I would not have lent myself to this stratagem, invented by that decorated gentleman. But you will excuse it, I am sure. The question was simply to verify the truth or falsehood of a tale by which your brother has gained the confidence of that noble family. Be careful now not to let it be believed that you have lent your brother twelve hundred thousand francs to buy the estate of Rubempré."

"Twelve hundred thousand francs!" exclaimed Madame Séchard, turning pale. "Where can he have got them, unhappy boy?"

"Ah, that's the point," said Derville. "I fear the source of his fortune is a very impure one."

The tears were in Ève's eyes, and her neighbors saw them.

"We have, perhaps, done you a great service," continued Derville, "by preserving you from being connected with a deception which may have very dangerous consequences."

Derville left Madame Séchard seated, and very pale, with the tears on her cheeks. He bowed to the company and quitted the house.

"To Mansle!" cried Corentin to the little boy who drove the cabriolet.

The diligence from Bordeaux to Paris passed through Mansle during the night; there was one seat in it. Derville asked Corentin to allow him to take it, alleging his urgent business; but in reality he wanted to shake off his travelling companion whose diplomatic dexterity and sangfroid seemed to him a well-

practised habit. Corentin stayed three days at Mansle without finding an opportunity to get away. He finally wrote to Bordeaux to retain a place for Paris where he did not return until nine days after his departure.

Five days after Derville's return Lucien received, in the morning, a visit from Rastignac.

"My dear fellow," said the latter, "I am almost in despair about a negotiation which has been confided to me on account of our well-known intimacy. Your marriage is broken off without allowing you any hope whatever of renewing it. Never put your foot again in the hôtel de Grandlieu. To marry Clotilde you would have to wait till the death of her father, and he's too selfish to die soon. Old whist-players hang long over their tables. Clotilde is going to Italy with Madeleine de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu. The poor girl really loves you; they have had to watch her; she wanted to come and see you, and actually made a plan to get away. That's one consolation for your disaster."

Lucien did not answer; he looked at Rastignac.

"After all, is it a disaster?" Rastignac went on. "You can find other girls as noble and much handsomer than Clotilde. Madame de Sérizy will find you one out of revenge; she can't endure the Grandlieus, who have never been willing to receive her. There's her niece, that little Clémence du Rouvre."

"My dear fellow, I am not on good terms with Madame de Sérizy. She saw me in Esther's box and made me a scene; I left her without a word."

"A woman of forty does n't quarrel long with a

young man as handsome as you," said Rastignac. "I know a little about those sunsets! They last ten minutes on the horizon and ten years in a woman's heart."

"I have been expecting a letter from her for the last week."

"Go and see her."

"Well, I suppose I must."

## XV.

### FAREWELL.

The day before the much talked-of housewarming, Madame du Val-Noble was sitting at nine in the morning by Esther's bedside, weeping bitterly. Her last protector had died suddenly, and she knew herself on the down-hill to misery.

"Oh! if I only had two thousand francs a year!" she cried. "With that I could live in a country-town and find some one to marry."

"I'll get them for you," said Esther.

"How?" cried Madame du Val-Noble, eagerly.

"Oh, easily enough. Listen. Pretend that you want to kill yourself; play the comedy well; send for Asia and offer to give her ten thousand francs for two black pearls in a very thin glass cover; she has them; they contain a poison that will kill in a second. Bring them to me, and I'll give you fifty thousand francs for them."

"Why don't you ask her for them yourself?" asked the Val-Noble.

"Asia would not sell them to me."

"They are not for yourself?"

"Perhaps so."

"You! — who live in the midst of joy and luxury and in a house of your own! You, on the eve of a

fête about which people will talk for ten years, — a fête that will cost Nucingen tens of thousands of francs! I'm told there'll be strawberries, here in February! asparagus! grapes! melons! and three thousand francs' worth of flowers are ordered for the salon!"

"What are you talking about? There'll be three thousand francs' worth of roses on the staircase alone."

"They say your dress cost ten thousand!"

"Yes; it is Brussels point. I wanted a regular bridal dress."

"Where am I to get the ten thousand francs for Asia?"

"Oh! I'll give them to you; it's all the money I have," said Esther, laughing. "Open my dressing-case; you'll find them — under the curl-papers."

"When people talk of dying they never kill themselves," said Madame du Val-Noble. "If it were to commit —"

"A crime? nonsense!" said Esther, completing the thought. "You need n't worry," she continued; "I'm not going to kill any one. I had a friend, a very happy woman; she is dead, and I shall follow her — that's all."

"How silly you are!"

"Can't help it, we promised each other."

"Then let the note go to protest," said Madame du Val-Noble, laughing.

"Do as I tell you, and go away. I hear a carriage, and it is Nucingen; he is going mad with happiness. Ah! he loves me, that man! Why don't we love those that love us?"

"Ah! that 's it," said Madame du Val-Noble. "It is the history of the herring, — the most intriguing of fishes."

"Why?"

"Nobody has ever known."

"Come, go, my angel! I must get you your fifty thousand francs."

"Well, then, adieu!"

For the last three days Esther's manner to the baron had completely changed. The mocking tone had first grown feline, and now the cat had turned into a woman. She lavished affection on the old man, and made herself charming to him. Her talk, devoid now of malice and bitterness, was even tender, and brought conviction to the mind of the clumsy banker. She called him Fritz; he believed she loved him.

He had now brought her the certificate of the investment on the Grand-Livre, and had come to breakfast with his "dear little anchel" to take her orders for the next day, the famous Saturday, the great day.

"Here, my little wife, my only wife," he said joyously, "here 's enough to keep your kitchen going for the rest of your days."

Esther took the paper, without the slightest emotion, folded it, and put it in her dressing-case.

"So now you are pleased, monster of iniquity," she said, giving a little tap to his cheek, — "pleased to see me accepting something from you at last. I can't tell you any more home truths, for now I share the fruit of what you call your labors. 'T is n't a gift, — no, my poor old man, it is a restitution. Come, don't put on your Bourse face; you know I love you."

"My beautiful Esther, my angel of love, don't talk to me so again," said the banker. "See! I would not care if all the world called me a thief if I could only be an honest man in your sight; I love you daily more and more."

"That's my plan," said Esther. "Therefore I will never again say anything to grieve you, my old elephant; for you've grown as innocent as a child. *Parbleu! vieux scélérat*, you never had any innocence but that which you came into the world with; it had to get to the surface some day, but 't was so deep down it could n't get up till you were sixty-five years old; and then it was fished up with the hook of love! — a phenomenon of old men. And that's why I've ended by loving you — you're young, oh! very young! There's none but me who knows *this* Frédéric — none but me! for you must have been a banker in your teens. I know you lent your schoolmates one marble on condition they returned you two. Ah! well, well!" she cried, as she saw him laugh, "you shall do as you like. Hey! pillage men, and I'll help you. Men are not worth being loved; Napoleon killed them like flies. What does it signify whether they pay taxes to you or the budget? There's no love in the budget, and I say — yes! I've reflected about it, and you're right — shear the sheep; that's in the Gospel according to Béranger. Kiss your Esther. Ah! *dis donc*, promise that you'll give that poor Val-Noble all the furniture of my apartment in the rue Taitbout — promise! And to-morrow, I want you to present her with fifty thousand francs. What a figure you'll cut, *mon chat!* Babylonian generosity! all the women will talk of you — so, after all, it is putting your money out at interest."

"You are right, my anchel; you know the world," he replied. "I'll be guided by you."

"Well," she said, "you see how I think about your affairs, and your consideration and your honor. Now go and get me that fifty thousand francs."

She wanted to be rid of him and send for a broker to sell the investment that very day at the Bourse.

"Why must I get them at once?"

"Oh, you silly! don't you know you should offer them in a pretty satin box under a fan, and say, 'Here, madame, is a fan that I hope will please you'? Do go and get the things at once."

"Charming," said the baron; "I shall have wit enough now. Yes, I shall repeat your words."

Just as poor Esther was flinging herself down, weary with the effort of playing her rôle, Europe entered.

"Madame," she said, "here's a messenger sent from the quai Malaquais by Celestin, Monsieur Lucien's valet."

"Let him come in. No, stay; I'll go to the antechamber."

Esther rushed to the antechamber and looked at the messenger, who seemed to her an ordinary porter. He gave her a letter.

When she had read it she dropped into a chair, and said, in a weak voice, —

"Tell *him* to come down;" adding, in Europe's ear, "Lucien has tried to kill himself. Show *him* the letter."

The abbé, who still wore the dress of a commercial traveller, came down at once, and instantly observed the porter standing in the antechamber.

"You told me there was no one here," he said in Europe's ear.

As a matter of precaution he passed into the salon after glancing at the man. Trompe-la-Mort was not aware that the well-known head of the detective police, who had arrested him in the Maison Vauquer, had a rival and possible successor in Contenson.

"Yes, you are right," said the porter (Contenson), when he joined his superior, Corentin, in the street. "The man you described is in the house; but he's no Spaniard. I'd be willing to put my hand in the fire that there's some of our own game under that cassock. He is no more a priest than he is a Spaniard."

"I'm certain of that," replied the head of the political police.

"Oh, if we could only prove it!" said Contenson.

Lucien had really been missing two days, and they had profited by his absence to lay this trap; but he returned that evening, and Esther's fears were quieted.

The next morning, just after she had taken her bath and had gone back to bed again, Madame du Val-Noble arrived.

"There are your two pearls," she said.

"Let me look," said Esther, half rising, and resting her pretty elbow on the lace pillow.

Madame du Val-Noble held out to her what looked to be two black currants. The baron had given Esther a pair of little greyhounds of a celebrated breed (which will sooner or later bear the name of a great contemporary poet, who first brought them into fashion). She was very proud of possessing them, and had given them the names of their progenitors,

Romeo and Juliet. Esther called Romeo. The pretty creature ran to her on his slender, flexible feet, so firm, so sinewy that they were like steel springs. He looked at his mistress. Esther made a gesture of throwing one of the pearls to attract his attention.

"His name has destined him to die thus," said Esther, flinging the pearl, which Romeo broke between his teeth.

The dog gave no cry; he turned upon himself and fell stone-dead while Esther was still uttering the words of his funeral oration.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Madame du Val-Noble.

"You have a carriage; carry off the late Romeo," said Esther. "His death would create a commotion here. Make haste. You shall have your fifty thousand francs to-night."

This was said so tranquilly, with the absolute insensibility characteristic of a courtesan, that Madame du Val-Noble cried out, —

"You are indeed our queen!"

"I shall say I lent Romeo to you; and you must say he died at your house. Come early, and look your best."

At five o'clock that afternoon, Esther dressed, as she had said, like a bride. She put on her lace gown over a skirt of white satin, and wore a white sash and white shoes, and over her beautiful shoulders a scarf of point d'Angleterre. In her hair were natural white camellias, and round her throat a necklace of pearls costing thirty thousand francs, sent to her by Nucingen. Though her toilet was finished by six o'clock, she had closed her doors to every one,

for she expected Lucien. He came at seven, and Europe found means to bring him up to Esther's room without his arrival being noticed.

When Lucien saw Esther dressed as she was and in all her beauty, he said to himself: "Why not go and live with her at Rubempré, far from the world, and never see Paris again? I have had five years' instalment of that life, and the dear creature's nature can never be false to itself; where could I ever find another such perfection?"

"My friend, you whom I have made my deity," said Esther, kneeling before Lucien, "bless me—"

Lucien tried to raise her, and kissed her, saying:

"You are joking, dear love."

Then he tried to take her by the waist, but Esther disengaged herself with a motion of mingled respect and horror.

"I am no longer worthy of you, Lucien," she said, letting the tears roll from her eyes. "I implore you, bless me—and swear to found two beds at the Hôtel Dieu; as for masses in church, God will never pardon me except to myself. I have loved you too much. But at least tell me that I made you happy and that you will sometimes think of me—won't you?"

Lucien saw such solemn sincerity in Esther's manner that he grew thoughtful.

"You mean to kill yourself," he said at last, in a tone of voice that indicated some deep meditation.

"No my friend; but to-day, you see, is the death of the woman, chaste and pure and loving, who was yours, and I am afraid that grief may kill me."

"Poor child! wait," said Lucien. "I have made great efforts during the last two days; I have managed to communicate with Clotilde."

"Always Clotilde!" she cried in a tone of smothered anger.

"Yes," he said, "we have written to each other. On Tuesday morning she starts on her journey, but I am to meet her near Fontainebleau on the road to Italy."

"Ah, *ça!* what do you want for wives, you men? Planks?" cried poor Esther. "Tell me, if I had four or five millions would you marry me?"

"Child! I was just about to tell you that if all is over for me, I want no other wife but you."

Esther lowered her head to hide her sudden pallor and the tears that she brushed from her eyes.

"You love me!" she said, looking at Lucien with bitter sorrow. "Well, that is my benediction. Don't compromise yourself; go down by the little staircase and pretend that you entered the salon from the antechamber. Kiss me on the forehead," she said. She took Lucien in her arms, strained him to her heart with violence, and said, "Go! go! or I must live."

When she appeared in the salon a cry of admiration arose. Esther's eyes reflected an infinity in which the soul seemed lost; and the blue-black of her beautiful hair brought out the white tones of the camellias. She had no rival. She appeared as the supreme expression of unbridled luxury, the creations of which surrounded her. Her talk sparkled with wit. She commanded the revels with the cold calmness of Habeneck at the Conservatoire when he leads the

best musicians of Europe in interpreting Beethoven and Mozart. Nucingen ate little and drank nothing. By midnight all the company had lost their senses. They broke the glasses that they might never be used again. The curtains were torn. None could keep their feet; the women were asleep on the sofas. Bixiou, who was drunk for the second time in his life, said, as he saw Nucingen lead Esther away, "The police ought to be notified, — some evil is about to happen."

The jester thought he jested; he prophesied.

Monsieur de Nucingen did not appear in his office until twelve o'clock Monday morning. At one o'clock, his broker informed him that Mademoiselle Esther van Gobseck had sold the investment on the Grand-Livre the preceding Friday and received the money.

"But, Monsieur le baron," he said, "the head-clerk in Monsieur Derville's office came in just as we were speaking of this transfer, and after reading Mademoiselle Esther's real name, he told me that Monsieur Derville was searching for her as the heiress to a fortune of seven millions."

"Bah!" cried Nucingen.

"Yes; she is the sole heiress of the old usurer Gobseck. Derville is to verify the facts. If the mother of Mademoiselle Esther was that beautiful Dutch girl who — "

"I know all that," said the banker. "She has related to me her life. I'll write a note to Derville."

The baron sat down at his desk, wrote the little note, and sent it. Then he went to the Bourse, and at three

o'clock he returned to the house in the place Saint-Georges.

"Madame has forbidden me to wake her under any pretext whatever," said Europe.

"The devil!" cried the baron. "Europe, my dear, she won't be angry if you tell her she is rich, richissime! She inherits a fortune of seven millions. Old Gobseck is dead, and your mistress is his heiress, for her mother was the old fellow's niece."

"Ha! your reign is over, old mountebank," said Europe, looking at the baron with the insolence of one of Molière's servant-women. "Eugh! old crow of Alsace! She loved you about as much as one loves the plague — Heavens and earth! millions? ah, now she can marry her lover! Oh! won't she be glad!"

And Prudence Servien left the baron confounded, and ran to be the first to tell her mistress of this stroke of luck. The old man, believing in his happiness, received this shock of cold water on his love at the moment when it had reached its highest degree of incandescence.

"She deceived me!" he cried, with tears in his eyes. "She was deceiving me! Oh, Esther! oh, my life! Fool that I have been! Such flowers cannot bloom for old men. Youth I could not buy. Oh, my life! What can I do? What shall I become? She is right, that dreadful Europe! Esther, rich, escapes me. Shall I go hang myself? What is life without love? Oh, my life!"

A piercing cry made him quiver to the very marrow of his bones; he rose, and walked with shaking legs,

drunk from the shock of disenchantment. Nothing intoxicates so fatally as the wine of misery. At the door of the chamber the unhappy man saw Esther stiff on her bed, livid from poison, dead.

He went to her side and fell on his knees.

"You are right," he said. "She warned me of this. She has died of me!"

Paccard, Asia, and the rest of the household ran in. It was a sight to see, — a surprise; but there was no desolation. Some uncertainty was felt among the servants. The baron became a banker, and, feeling suspicious, was imprudent enough to ask where were the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, the product of the sale of the investment. Paccard, Asia, and Europe looked at each other in so singular a manner that Nucingen went out immediately, believing in a murder and robbery. Europe, who felt under Esther's pillow a limp package which seemed to reveal bank-notes, began to busy herself with the body, and said to Asia: —

"Go and tell Monsieur Carlos. To die before she knew she had seven millions! Tell monsieur that Gobseck was her uncle, and has left her everything."

Paccard seized the meaning of Europe's manœuvre. As soon as Asia's back was turned, Europe opened the package, on which the poor girl had written, "To be given to Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré." Seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in bank-bills beamed on the eyes of Prudence Servien.

"Oh," she cried, "how happy and honest we might be for the rest of our days!"

Paccard's thieving nature was stronger than his attachment to Trompe-la-Mort.

"Durut is dead," he said; "my shoulder is still clear. Let us be off together, and divide it up, so as not to have all our eggs in one basket, and get married."

"But where can we hide?" said Prudence.

"In Paris," replied Paccard.

The pair turned and went down the stairway with the rapidity of thieves, and left the house.

"My dear," said Trompe-la-Mort, when Asia had told her news, "go and find me a letter or paper in Esther's handwriting, while I write her will. Carry the letter and will to Girard, and tell him to write it off at once, for you must slip the will under Esther's pillow before the seals are put on."

He then wrote the following draft of a will: —

Having never loved any one in the world but Monsieur Lucien Chardon de Rubempré, and being resolved to put an end to my days rather than fall back into vice and the infamous life from which his charity redeemed me, I give and bequeath to the said Lucien Chardon de Rubempré all that I die possessed of, on condition that he will found a mass at the parish church of Saint-Roch for the repose of her who has given him all, even her last thought.

ESTHER GOBSECK.

"There, that's sufficiently in her style!" said Trompe-la-Mort.

By seven in the evening this will, duly written and signed by a trained forger, was put by Asia under Esther's pillow.

"The police have come!" she cried, hurrying up to the abbé's room shortly after.

"You mean the justice of peace and his people."

"No, I do not; the justice of peace was there too, but the gendarmes accompany him. The public prosecutor and the justice of peace are both there. The doors are guarded."

"This death has made a sudden rumpus," said Trompe-la-Mort.

"Europe and Paccard have disappeared, and I'm afraid they have carried off the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs," said Asia.

"Ah, the blackguards!" he cried. "That bit of pilfering may lose *us all!*"

Human justice and Parisian justice, — that is to say, the most distrustful, most intelligent, ablest, and best-informed of all justice, — too intelligent sometimes, because it interprets everything solely by the law, — had at last put its hand on the threads of this horrible intrigue. The Baron de Nucingen, recognizing the effects of poison, and remembering the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, thought that one or other of the odious servants whom he disliked was guilty of a crime. In his first fury he went straight to the prefecture of police. It was like ringing a bell that brought all Corentin's minions into play. The prefecture, the courts, the commissary of police, the justice of peace, the examining justice, were at once afoot. By nine o'clock three doctors were engaged on poor Esther's autopsy, and the inquiry began. Trompe-la-Mort, informed of this by Asia, said coolly: —

"No one knows I am here; I can keep out of sight."

He raised himself by the frame of his garret skylight, and sprang with extraordinary agility to the

roof, where, standing erect, he began to consider the surroundings with the coolness of a slater. "Good!" he said, noticing a garden at a distance of five houses off, "a garden; that 's all I want."

"Easily pleased, Trompe-la-Mort," said Contenson, coming from behind a stack of chimneys. "You can explain to Monsieur Camusot what sort of mass monsieur l'abbé proposed to say on the roofs; and, above all, why he wanted to run away."

"I have enemies in Spain," said Carlos Herrera.

"Come, we 'll go down through your attic."

Carlos yielded apparently; but as soon as he could brace himself against the frame of the sky-light, he seized Contenson round the legs, and flung him with such violence that the police-spy fell headlong into the place Saint-Georges, and died upon his field of honor. Jacques Collin returned composedly to his attic, where he went to bed.

"Give me something to make me very ill without killing me," he said to Asia. "Don't be alarmed at whatever happens. I am a priest, and I shall stay a priest. I have just got rid, in a natural manner, for he slipped off the roof, of the only man who could unmask me."

At seven o'clock the same evening, Lucien had started in his cabriolet, with a passport taken that morning for Fontainebleau, where he slept in the last inn on the road to Nemours. About six the next morning he went on foot through the forest and walked to Bouron.

"It was just there," he thought, sitting down on one of the rocks from which the noble landscape of

Bouron can be seen, "just at that fatal spot, that Napoleon hoped to make a gigantic effort two nights before his abdication."

After a while he heard the wheels of a carriage, and a britska passed him, in which were the servants of the young Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu and the waiting-maid of Clotilde de Grandlieu.

"Here they come," thought Lucien; "now to play this comedy well, and I am saved. I shall be the son-in-law of the duke in spite of him."

An hour passed, and then a travelling-carriage, in which were the two young women, came on with the roll, so easily distinguished, of an elegant equipage. The duchess had given orders to put the brake on the wheels as the carriage came down the steep descent from Bouron. The footman got off his seat to obey her, and the carriage stopped. At that moment Lucien advanced.

"Clotilde!" he cried, tapping on the window.

"No," said the young duchess to her friend, "he must not get into the carriage; he shall not be alone with us. Have a last interview with him; I consent to that; but it must be on the open road, where we will go on foot, followed by Baptiste. The day is fine, we are warmly dressed, and we need not fear the cold. The carriage can follow."

They both got out.

"Baptiste," said the duchess, "the postilion is to follow slowly; we want to walk a little way, and you will accompany us."

Madeleine de Mortsauf took Clotilde by the arm, and allowed Lucien to talk with her. Together they

walked on to the little village of Grey. It was then eight o'clock, and there Clotilde bade Lucien good-bye.

"Remember, my friend," she said, ending nobly the long interview, "I will never marry any one but you. I prefer to believe in you above all men, above even my father and my mother. Could I give you a greater proof of my attachment? Now strive to remove the unjust prejudices which weigh upon you."

The gallop of several horses was heard, and in a moment a squad of gendarmes surrounded the little group, much to the astonishment of the two ladies.

"What do you mean by this?" said Lucien, with the arrogance of a fashionable young man.

"Are you Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré?" asked a person who was the public prosecutor of Fontainebleau.

"Yes, monsieur."

"You will sleep to-night in La Force; I have a warrant to arrest you."

"Who are these ladies?" inquired the corporal of gendarmes.

"Ah, true! Mesdames, your passports — for this young man has acquaintances, so my instructions say, with women capable of —"

"Do you take the Duchesse de Lenoncourt and her friend for such women?" said Madeleine, casting the look of a duchess at the speaker. "Baptiste, show our passports."

"Of what crime is monsieur accused?" asked Clotilde, whom the duchess was entreating to get into the carriage.

"Of theft, and murder," replied the corporal of gendarmes.

Baptiste lifted Mademoiselle de Grandlieu in a dead faint into the carriage.

At midnight Lucien was locked up in the prison of La Force, where he was kept in solitary confinement. The Abbé Carlos Herrera had been brought there on the previous evening.

## XVI.

### WHITHER THE PATH OF EVIL LED.

At six o'clock on the following morning, two vehicles, called, in the vigorous language of the populace, "salad-baskets," left the prison of La Force and took the road to the Conciergerie, the prison of the Palais de Justice.

There are few loungers in Paris who have not met this rolling jail; but — although as a rule French books are written solely for Parisians — foreigners may like to find here a description of this formidable equipage of our criminal justice. Who knows but what the Russian, German, or Austrian police, hitherto lacking salad-baskets, may profit by it? and in several foreign countries an imitation of this mode of transportation would certainly be a benefit to prisoners.

This ignoble vehicle, with a yellow body, mounted on two wheels, and lined with sheet-iron, is divided into two compartments. In the first is a seat, covered with leather and having a leathern apron. Here sit the constable and a gendarme. Behind them a heavy iron grating, reaching from roof to floor, filling the whole width of the vehicle, separates this species of cabriolet from the second compartment, in which are two wooden benches, placed, as in omnibuses, on either side of the van; on these the prisoners sit.

They are put in at the back, where there is one step, through an iron door without a window. The nickname of "salad-basket" came from the fact that the vehicle had originally an open grating on all sides, through which the prisoners could be seen, shaken about like lettuces. For greater security, in case of accidents, this van is followed by a gendarme on horseback, especially when conveying condemned prisoners to the scaffold. Consequently escape is impossible. The vehicle, being lined with sheet-iron, cannot be cut by any instrument. The prisoners, carefully searched when arrested or when locked up, possess no other implement than, possibly, their watch-springs, which may serve to file a bar, but are useless on smooth surfaces. The salad-basket, now brought to perfection by the police of Paris, serves as a model for the cellular wagon used to convey convicts to the galleys, which has taken the place of the dreadful cart, that shame of preceding generations, though Manon Lescaut glorified it.

The salad-basket serves several purposes. First, it conveys accused persons before trial from the various prisons to the Palais, there to be questioned by the examining magistrate. In prison language this is called "going up for examination." Also it conveys accused persons to the Palais for trial, unless the case is one for the correctional police-courts, which take cognizance of misdemeanors only. When "a big criminal," to use a Palais term, is concerned the salad-basket conveys him from the various houses of correction to the Conciergerie, which is the jail for the department of the Seine. Finally, criminals condemned to

death are taken in it from Bicêtre (where prisoners under capital sentence are confined) to the barrière Saint-Jacques, the place designated for executions after the revolution of July. Thanks to philanthropy, these unhappy wretches no longer suffer the torture of conveyance from the Conciergerie to the Place de Grève in a cart exactly like that used for the conveyance of wood. That cart is only used now for conveyance *from* the scaffold. It is impossible to go to execution more comfortably than by the present system in Paris.

At this moment the two salad-baskets, issuing so early in the morning, were engaged, somewhat exceptionally, in transferring two accused persons from the house of correction called La Force to the Conciergerie; each of these prisoners had a salad-basket to himself.

Nine-tenths of readers, and nine-tenths of the last tenth are ignorant of the very considerable differences that exist among the words *inculpé* [suspected person], *prévenu* [accused person], *accusé* [indicted person], *détenu* [convicted person, prisoner], *maison d'arrêt* [house of correction], *maison de justice* or *maison de detention* [jail, or prison]. Readers will be surprised to hear that our whole process of criminal law lies in those terms, which will presently be explained for the elucidation of our story. When it is known that the first salad-basket contained Jacques Collin, and the second Lucien de Rubempré, fallen in a few hours from the summit of grandeur to a prisoner's cell, the curiosity of readers will be sufficiently excited to make them glad of these details.

The attitude of the two accomplices was character-

istic. Lucien de Rubempré hid his face to escape the glances which the street passengers cast through the front grating of the ill-omened vehicle as it went from the rue Saint-Antoine to the quays, through the rue du Martroi and the arcade of Saint-Jean, beneath which it had to pass in order to cross the Place of the Hôtel-de-Ville. To-day that arcade forms the entrance to the house of the prefect of the Seine, in the vast municipal structure. The bold galley-slave, on the contrary, held his face as near as he could get it to the grating, between the policeman and the gendarme, who, certain of the security of their vehicle, gave no heed to the prisoner, and were talking of their own affairs.

The days of July, 1830, and their formidable whirlwind did so overlay with their uproar anterior events, political interests were so absorbing during the last six months of that year, that few persons at the present moment remember the private, financial, or judicial catastrophes, singular as they were, which formed the food of Parisian curiosity during the early months of that year. It is therefore necessary to state how all Paris was momentarily agitated by the news of the arrest of a Spanish priest found in the house of a courtesan, and that of the elegant Lucien de Rubempré, the suitor of Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, arrested on the high-road to Italy near the little village of Grey; both of them being suspected of a murder the profits of which would have exceeded seven millions. The excitement caused by this scandal even surpassed for several days the immense interest taken in the last elections under Charles X.

In the first place this criminal affair involved, as a

party concerned in it, one of the richest bankers in Paris, Baron de Nucingen. Then Lucien, on the eve of becoming private secretary to the prime minister, belonged to the very highest circle of Parisian society. In all the salons of Paris it was remembered that the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had taken him up, and that he was then intimate with Madame de Sérizy, wife of one of the ministers of State. Also. the beauty of the victim had remarkable celebrity in the various worlds which compose Paris, — the great world, the financial world, the world of courtesans, the world of young men, the literary world. For two days all Paris had been talking of these arrests. The examining judge, on whom the affair devolved, Monsieur Camusot, saw in it a chance for his own advancement, and, in order to proceed with as much alertness as possible, he had ordered the transference of the two accused persons from La Force to the Conciergerie as soon as Lucien de Rubempré should arrive from Fontainebleau.

Before entering into the terrible drama of a criminal examination, it is necessary to explain the normal process of a case of this kind, so that its divers phases may be better understood both by Frenchmen and foreigners; who will thus be enabled to appreciate more fully our system of criminal law as the legislators under Napoleon conceived it. This is all the more important because that great and noble work is at this moment threatened with destruction by a new system calling itself reformatory.

A crime is committed. If detected in the act, the suspected persons are taken to the nearest guardhouse and put in the cell called in popular parlance

"the violin," probably on account of the music — of cries and tears — that is heard there. From there they are taken before the commissary of police, who makes a preliminary inquiry and has the power to release them if a mistake has been made; otherwise they are next taken to the dépôt, or guard-house of the prefecture, where the police hold them at the disposition of the prosecuting officer and the examining judge, who, being informed of the affair, more or less promptly according to the gravity of the case, come to the dépôt and question the parties who are in a condition of provisional arrest. According to the presumptive nature of the case the examining judge issues a warrant and orders the accused person locked up in a house of correction. Paris has three such houses: Saint-Pélagie, La Force, and Les Madelonnettes.

Remark the term "suspected person" [*inculpé*, inculpated person]. Our code has created three essential distinctions in criminality, — inculpation, arraignment, indictment. So long as the warrant for arrest is not signed, the presumed authors of the crime, or the grave misdemeanor, are only suspected persons; under the warrant of arrest they become accused persons [*prévenu*], and they remain simply accused as long as the examination continues. When the examination ends and the judge decides that the accused persons must be referred to a court of justice, they pass to the condition of indicted persons [*accusé*] as soon as the Royal court decides, on the application of its attorney-general, that there is sufficient ground to send the case before the court of assizes. Thus persons suspected of crime pass through three states, three

sieves, preliminary to their appearance before what is called the justice of the land. In the first state, innocent persons have various means for making known their innocence, — through the public, their keepers, the police. In the second state, they come before a magistrate, are confronted with witnesses, and judged, — in chambers in Paris, or by a whole court in the departments. In the third state, they appear before a dozen judges, and the sentence of transference to the court of assizes may, in case of error or defect of form, be carried by the indicted persons before the Court of Appeals. A jury does not know how many ears of municipal, administrative, and judicial authority it boxes when it acquits an indicted person. Therefore it seems to us that in Paris (we are not speaking of other places) it is a difficult matter for an innocent person ever to reach the benches of the court of assizes.

The convicted person [*détenu*] is the condemned man. Our criminal law has created houses of correction, jails, and prisons [*maisons d'arrêt, de justice, et détention*], with differences which correspond to those of accused, indicted, and convicted. The punishment of mere incarceration is light, and is given for the lesser misdemeanors; that of imprisonment means bodily restraint, and is, in some cases, ignominious. Those who propose to-day a general reformatory system are simply overthrowing an admirable criminal equity of graduated punishment; and they will end in punishing peccadilloes almost as severely as great crimes. Compare the curious differences which exist between the criminal law of the Code Brumaire, year IV., and the Code Napoleon which was substituted for it.

In nearly all great criminal cases, like the one with which we are now concerned, the suspected persons become almost immediately accused persons. The law at once gives the warrant for removal to the prefecture and the warrant of arrest. Thus, as we have seen, the police and the law both fell together with the rapidity of lightning upon Esther's house. Even if no suspicions of murder and revenge had been whispered by Corentin into the ears of the judiciary police, the Baron de Nucingen had denounced a robbery of seven hundred thousand francs.

As the first salad-basket, containing Jacques Collin, reached the dark and narrow passage of the arcade of Saint Jean, an obstruction of some kind forced the postilion to stop beneath it. The eyes of the accused man shone through the grating like a pair of carbuncles, in spite of the mask of death on his features, to which the governor of La Force had felt it his duty to call the attention of the doctor of the prison. Free at this moment (for neither the gendarme nor the policeman looked round at their "customer") those flaming eyes spoke a language so clear that a clever examining judge, like Popinot for example, would have recognized the galley-slave in the priest. Jacques Collin, from the moment that the salad-basket issued from the gateway of La Force, had examined everything on the way. Though the vehicle was driven fast, his eye took in the houses with its eager but thorough glance, from their garrets to the street level. He saw all the passers, and analyzed them. An omniscient eye could scarcely have seized creation, in its means and ends, more completely than this man

caught up the slightest details in the mass of things and human beings that passed him. Armed with a hope, as the last of the Horatii with his sword, he expected succor. To any other man than a Machiavelli of the galleys, the hope would have seemed so impossible to realize that he would certainly have let himself go mechanically, as most culprits do; for few of them ever dream of resisting the situation in which the law and the police of Paris place accused persons,—especially those who, like Jacques Collin and Lucien, are in solitary confinement. It is difficult for those at large to imagine what this sudden isolation is to the accused person; the gendarmes who arrest him, those who convey him to the lock-up, the turnkeys who place him in what is literally a dungeon, those who take him by the arm and make him mount the step into the salad-basket, in short, all the beings who surround him from the time of his arrest are mute, and notice him only to make a record of his words for the police or the judge. This absolute separation, so instantaneously and easily brought about between the whole world and the accused person, causes an upset of all his faculties, and a fearful prostration of mind; above all, when the person happens to be one not familiar, through his antecedents, with the ways of the law. The duel between the accused man and the examining judge is, therefore, all the more terrible because the latter has for auxiliary the silence of the walls and the incorruptible stolidity of the agents of the law.

However, Jacques Collin, or Carlos Herrera (it is necessary to give him both names, according to the exigencies of each situation), knew by long experience

the ways of the police, of jails, and of law. Therefore this colossus of craft and corruption had employed all the forces of his mind, and the resources of his art of counterfeiting, in playing surprise and the guilelessness of innocence, — all the while giving the magistrates the comedy of his death-agony. Asia, that knowing Locusta, had given him a poison modified to a degree that produced the semblance of mortal illness. The proceedings of Monsieur Camusot, the examining judge, those of the commissary of police, and the activity of the public prosecutor, were all hampered, if not annulled, by the action of a fit of apoplexy.

"He must have poisoned himself!" cried Monsieur Camusot, horror-struck at the sufferings of the so-called priest, when he was brought from the attic in horrible convulsions.

Four policemen had the utmost difficulty in getting him down the stairs to Esther's chamber, where the magistrates and the gendarmes were assembled.

"That is what he had better do if he is guilty," said the public prosecutor.

"Do you really think him ill?" said the commissary of police.

The police doubt everything. The three officials were speaking, of course, in a whisper; but Jacques Collin guessed from their faces the subject they were discussing, and he profited by it to render of no avail the first inquiries which are made at the moment of arrest. He stammered a few phrases in a mixture of Spanish and French that conveyed mere nonsense.

At La Force this comedy had an equal success, all the greater because the chief of the detective brigade,

Bibi-Lupin, who had formerly arrested Jacques Collin at the *pension bourgeoise* of Madame Vauquer, was on a mission in the departments, and his temporary successor had never known the famous convict.

Bibi-Lupin, formerly a galley-slave, and a companion of Jacques Collin at the galleys, was his personal enemy. This enmity had its rise in quarrels, from which Jacques Collin always issued uppermost, and in the supremacy exercised by Trompe-la-Mort over the other convicts. Moreover, Jacques Collin had been during ten years the providence of released galley-slaves, their chief, their adviser in Paris, the repository of their funds, and, consequently, the antagonist of Bibi-Lupin in his present capacity.

Thus it was that, although he was *au secret* [in solitary confinement], he counted on the absolute and intelligent devotion of Asia, his right arm, and perhaps on Paccard, his left arm; for he thought that careful lieutenant would return to his duty as soon as he had put the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs in safety. This was the reason of the almost superhuman attention with which he examined everything as the salad-basket went along. Singular to say, this hope was amply justified!

The two stout walls of the arcade of Saint-Jean were splashed to a height of six feet with a permanent coating of mud thrown up from the gutter. Foot passengers had nothing to protect them from the incessant line of vehicles passing through the narrow way. More than once the heavy cart of some stone-cutter had crushed pedestrians. This will show the narrowness of the arcade, and the ease with which it could be

blocked. A hackney-coach had just entered it from the Place de Grève, and an old market-woman was pushing a little hand-cart full of apples from the rue du Martroi; a third vehicle coming along naturally occasioned an obstruction. The pedestrians fled in alarm, seeking a post that might protect them from the old-fashioned hubs to the wheels, which projected so far that a law was actually passed about this very time to reduce them. When the salad-basket arrived, the arcade was fairly blocked by the old woman's hand-cart. She was a regular street-peddler of fruits; her head, covered with a dirty cotton handkerchief of a checked pattern, bristled with rebellious locks that looked like the hair of a wild-boar. The red and wrinkled neck was horrible to behold, and the handkerchief on her shoulders did not wholly hide a skin that was discolored by the sun and dust and mud. Her gown was in rags, and her shoes grinned as if they were making fun of her face, which was quite as full of holes as her gown. And what a stomach! — a poultice would have seemed less nauseous. At a distance of ten paces, this fetid and ambulating bundle of rags was offensive to the nose. The hands must have gleaned a hundred harvests. Either this woman had come direct from a witch's sabbath, or from some haunt of mendicants. But what a glance! what audacious intelligence! what concentrated life when the magnetic gleams of her eyes and those of Jacques Collin met and exchanged a thought!

"Out of the way, you old bundle of vermin!" cried the postilion of the salad-basket in a hoarse voice.

"Don't you dare to crush me, hussar of the guillo-

tine, you!" she replied. "Your merchandise ain't worth mine."

In trying to squeeze between two posts, to get out of the way, the old woman blocked the passage long enough to accomplish her object.

"Oh, Asia!" said Jacques Collin to himself, recognizing his accomplice at once, "all 's well now!"

The postilion continued to exchange amenities with the crone, and the vehicles accumulated.

"*Ahé! pécairé fermati. Souni là. Vedrem!*" cried Asia, with the wild intonations common to street venders, who distort their words till they become cabalistic to any but a practised Parisian ear.

In the hurly-burly of the street, and the shouts of the angry coachmen, no one paid attention to that savage cry, which seemed to be that of the old vender. But the clamor, perfectly distinct for Jacques Collin, cast into his ear, in a patois of Italian and corrupt Provençal previously agreed upon, these terrible words: "Your poor little one is taken; but I am on the watch. You will see me again."

In the midst of the joy he felt at this triumph over the power of the law, for he knew he could now establish communication with the outside world, Jacques Collin was struck down by so violent a reaction that it would have killed any other man than he.

"Lucien arrested!" he said to himself. He came near fainting away. This news was more awful to him far than the rejection of his last appeal had he been condemned to death.

## XVII.

### HISTORY, ARCHÆOLOGICAL, BIOGRAPHICAL, ANECDOTICAL, AND PHYSIOLOGICAL OF THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE.

Now that the two salad-baskets are rolling along the quays, the interests of our present history require a few words on the Conciergerie during the time it will take those vehicles to arrive there. The Conciergerie, historic name and awful word, but thing more awful still, plays its part in all the revolutions of France, and especially in those of Paris. It has seen most of the great criminals. Of all the public buildings in Paris this is the most interesting; it is also the least known — by persons belonging to the upper classes of society. But, in spite of the immense interest of this historical digression, we must make it as rapid as the advance of the salad-baskets.

Where is the Parisian, the provincial, or the foreigner, even if the two latter are but a couple of days in Paris, who has not remarked those black walls, flanked by three stout towers with pointed tops of which two are almost coupled, the sombre and mysterious ornament of what is called the quai des Lunettes? This quay begins at the Pont au Change, and extends to the Pont Neuf. A square tower, called the Tour de l'Horloge, from which was given the signal for the Saint-Barthélemy, — a tower almost as tall

as that of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, — is the beginning of the Palais and forms the corner of the quay. These four towers and the walls are covered with that black shroud which drapes the front of buildings in Paris that face the north. Toward the middle of the quay, at an unused arcade, begin a number of private buildings which were stopped by the construction of the Pont Neuf in the reign of Henri IV. The Place Royal was a replica of the Place Dauphine; it shows the same system of architecture, and of brick surrounded by freestone angles and courses. The arcade and the rue du Harlay indicate the limits of the Palais on the west. Formerly the Prefecture of police, the residence of the parliament judges, was joined to the Palais; and the Court of the Exchequer and the Tax office completed this abode of supreme law, once that of the sovereign. Before the Revolution, as we can see, the Palais really had the isolation which the government is endeavoring to create for itself in these days.

This square, or we might call it this isle of public buildings, among which is the Sainte-Chapelle, the most magnificent gem in the jewel-case of Saint Louis, this space is the sanctuary of Paris; it is the sacred place, the ark of the Lord. In the first place, it was the whole of the primitive city, for the ground now occupied by the Place Dauphine was a field belonging to the royal domain, in which was a windmill used for coining money. Hence the name of the rue de la Monnaie, given to the street that leads to the Pont Neuf. Hence also the name of one of the three round towers (the second), which is called the Tour d'Argent, which seems to prove that money was originally minted

there. The famous windmill, which can be seen on the ancient maps of Paris, is apparently of later date than the money struck in the palace itself, and was, no doubt, built for some improvement in the art of minting. The first tower, which is side by side with the Tour d'Argent, is called the Tour de Montgomery. The third, the smallest but the best preserved of the three, for it has kept its battlements, is called the Tour Bonbec. The Sainte-Chapelle, with its four towers (including the Tour de l'Horloge), defines distinctly the precincts — the perimeter, as a clerk in the registry-office might say — of the Palais, from the days of the Merovingians to those of the first House of Valois. But for us, and in consequence of its transformations, this palace represents more especially the epoch of Saint Louis.

Charles V. was the first who abandoned the Palais to the parliament, an institution then newly created, and went to live under the protection of the Bastille, in the famous hôtel de Saint-Paul. Under the last Valois, royalty removed from the Bastille to the Louvre, which had been its first bastille, that is, fortress. The first dwelling of the kings of France, the palace of Saint Louis, which has always kept its name of "Palais" to signify the palace *par excellence,* is now completely enclosed in what is called the "Palais de Justice." It forms the basement or cellar of the modern buildings; for it was built, like the Cathedral, in the Seine, but built so carefully that the highest water in the river scarcely reaches to its lower steps. The quai de l'Horloge buries about twenty feet of these ten times centennial buildings. Carriages roll

along on the level of the capitals of the strong columns that support the three towers, the elevation of which must, in former times, have been in harmony with the elegant proportions of the palace, and gracefully picturesque on the water side; for even to-day these old towers rival in height the tallest public buildings in Paris. When we contemplate this vast capital from the top of the cupola of the Pantheon, the Palais with the Sainte-Chapelle still seems the most stupendous of all the monumental buildings of Paris.

This palace of our kings, above which you walk as you cross the floor of the immense "Salle des Pas-Perdus," was a marvel of architecture; it is so still to the intelligent eyes of the poet who studies it while he examines the Conciergerie. Alas! the Conciergerie has ruthlessly invaded this regal and ancient palace. The heart bleeds to see how cells, corridors, lodging-rooms, and halls, without light or air, have been cut in this magnificent construction, where Byzantine, Roman, and Gothic art — those three aspects of ancient art — were united and reproduced in the architecture of the twelfth century. This palace is to the architectural history of France in the earliest times what the Château of Blois is to the architectural history of the middle ages. Just as at Blois, in the court-yard, you can admire the castle of the Comtes of Blois, that of Louis XII., that of François I., and that of Gaston d'Orléans, so at the Conciergerie you will find, within one precinct, the characteristics of the earliest races, and in the Sainte-Chapelle the architecture of Saint Louis. Ah, municipal council! you who

spend millions! put a poet or two beside your architects if you would save the cradle of Paris, the cradle of our kings, while you busy yourself in bestowing upon Paris and its supreme court a palace worthy of France. It is a matter that should be studied for years before you commit yourself to action. Build a few more prisons like that of La Roquette, and the old Palais of Saint Louis could be redeemed.

To-day many wounds have injured this vast monument of the past, sunken beneath the palace and the quay like some fossil animal in the clay of Montmartre; but the greatest of all is that of having been the Conciergerie! That word, who does not understand it? In the first days of the monarchy great criminals — the villains (original name of peasants) and the burghers belonging to urbane or seigniorial jurisdictions, also the possessors of "great or little fiefs" — were brought before the king and kept in the Conciergerie. The original Conciergerie must have been exactly where we find the judicial Conciergerie of the Parliament before 1825, namely, under the arcade to the right of the grand exterior staircase, which leads to the Cour Royale. From there, up to 1825, all persons condemned to death went to the scaffold. From there issued all great criminals, all victims of policy or statecraft, the Maréchale d'Ancre and the Queen of France, Semblançay and Malesherbes, Damien and Danton, Desrues and Castaing. The office of Fouquier-Tinville, like that of the present public prosecutor, was placed so that he could see the persons condemned by the Revolutionary tribunal file in. That human being transformed into an axe could here give a last glance at his "batches."

After 1825, under the ministry of Monsieur de Peyronnet, a great change took place at the Palais. The old jailer's office, called the *guichet* of the Conciergerie, in which took place the ceremonies of registration and of the *toilette* so-called, was closed up and removed to where it now is, between the Tour de l'Horloge and the Tour Montgomery, in an inner court-yard, indicated on the quay by an arcade. The salad-baskets enter this court-yard, where there is room for several to be stationed and turn with ease, and even find, in case of riot, complete protection behind the strong iron gates of the arcade. The Conciergerie of to-day, scarcely large enough to hold the present number of indicted persons (averaging three hundred men and women), no longer lodges accused persons or convicted ones, except on rare occasions like that which now brought Jacques Collin and Lucien de Rubempré within its walls. All those who are confined there are indicted persons who appear before the court of assizes. Occasionally the authorities permit some criminal of high station, already sufficiently dishonored by appearance in the dock at the assizes, to undergo his sentence there rather than in the prison of Melun or Poissy, where the disgrace of the punishment would be greater than his crime deserved. Ouvrard preferred to stay in the Conciergerie rather than go to Sainte-Pélagie; and at the present moment the notary Lehon and the Prince de Bergues are undergoing their sentences there under an arbitrary tolerance, but a humane one.

Generally, accused persons, whether they are going before the examining judge or to the correctional police

courts, are dropped by the salad-baskets at the Souricière. The Souricière is exactly opposite to the jailer's office [*guichet*], so-called from the wicket at its entrance. Above it is the guard-room of the interior guard detailed from the *gendarmerie* of the department, and the staircase from below ends there. When the hour for the assembling of the court arrives, the turnkeys call the names of the accused, the gendarmes come down into the Souricière, and each gendarme takes an accused person by the arm. Thus coupled they go up the staircase, across the guard-room, along the corridors to a room adjoining the famous sixth court-room, in which are held the sessions of the correctional police court. Accused persons who go to the Conciergerie for examination are taken the same way. All the different offices of the examining judges are in this part of the Palais, on different floors, and they are reached by wretched little staircases, among which persons unfamiliar with the Palais are certain to lose their way. The windows of these offices look either on the quay or into the court-yard of the Conciergerie.

It was here, therefore, that the salad-basket containing Jacques Collin was making its way. Nothing can be more forbidding than the aspect of the place. Criminals and visitors see before them two wrought-iron gates, six feet apart, always opening one after the other; and so scrupulously is everything and everybody watched that persons who have permits to visit the place must pass the first grating before the key is put into the second. Imagine therefore the difficulty of escape or of any communication with the outside. The governor of the Conciergerie would smile in

a way to freeze the boldest novelist who should suggest a thing so impossible. In the annals of the Conciergerie only one escape is recorded; that of Lavalette; but the certainty of august connivance, now proved, must lessen, to our minds, if not the devotion of his wife, at least the danger of failure.

Judging on the spot the nature of the obstacles, the greatest devotees of the heroic and marvellous will admit that through all time they have been what they still are, invincible. No description can give an idea of the strength of those walls and vaulted ceilings, — they must be seen. The number of jailers, turnkeys, warders (call them what you like) is not as large as might be imagined; there are but twenty. Their dormitory and their beds differ in no degree from those of the "Pistole," — so named, no doubt, because in former times the prisoners were made to pay a pistole a week for their lodging, — the bareness of which recalls the cold attic-rooms in which penniless great men begin their careers in Paris.

These dormitories are to the right of an immense vaulted hall, the massive walls of which are supported by mighty columns. On the left is the "greffe" of the Conciergerie, — the registration office, where sit the director and his clerk. Here the accused person, or the indicted person, is registered, described, and searched. Here is decided the kind of lodging he is to have, which depends upon the length of his purse. Opposite to the wicket of this door is a glass door, that of a parlor, in which the friends and lawyers of the accused may communicate with him through a double grating of wood. This parlor is lighted from the "préau,"

an inner court-yard, where the prisoners are made to take air and exercise at stated hours.

The great hall, dimly lighted from these two openings, for its solitary window looks upon the entrance court-yard, offers a spectacle and an atmosphere entirely in keeping with the preconceived ideas of the imagination. It is all the more terrifying because, parallel with the towers, you see openings into crypts, vaulted, mysterious, awful, without light, which lead to the dungeons of the Queen and Madame Elizabeth, and to the cells called "les secrets" where persons who are to be kept in solitary confinement are put. This labyrinth of stone is the subterranean region of the present Palais de Justice, having in its own great days been the "Palais" itself, the scene of the fêtes of royalty. From 1825 to 1832, it was in this great hall, between a huge china stove, which warmed it, and the first of the iron gates, that the well-known operation of the *toilette* was done. We cannot step without a shudder over the flags of that pavement which have received the confidences of so many last glances.

## XVIII.

### HOW THE TWO ACCUSED PERSONS TOOK THEIR MISFORTUNE.

When the salad-basket containing the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera reached the court-yard, the half-dying man required the assistance of two gendarmes to enable him to leave the horrid vehicle. They each took an arm, supported him, and bore him, fainting, into the registration office. Thus dragged along, the sufferer raised his eyes to heaven; no human face was ever more cadaverous, more painfully distorted than that of the unfortunate Spanish priest, who seemed on the point of giving up the ghost. When seated in the office, he repeated in a weak voice the words he had addressed to every one since his arrest: —

"I appeal to his Excellency the ambassador of Spain."

"You can say that," replied the director, "to the examining judge."

"Oh, God!" sighed the priest. "Can I have a breviary? Will they still refuse me a doctor? I have not two hours to live."

As Carlos Herrera was to be kept in solitary confinement, it was unnecessary to ask him if he wanted the benefits of the *pistole* — which means the right of occupying a room in which the law permits a little comfort; these rooms are situated at the end of the

*préau.* The turnkey and the registration clerk went phlegmatically through the business of receiving and committing the prisoner.

"Monsieur le directeur," said Herrera, in broken French, "I am dying, as you see. Say, if you can, to this judge of whom you speak, that I implore him, as a favor, to do what a criminal would fear, — to let me appear before him as soon as possible; for my sufferings are really intolerable, and as soon as I can see him this dreadful mistake will end."

Invariable rule! all criminals talk of mistakes. Go to the galleys and question the convicts; they will tell you they are victims to some error of the law. The word, therefore, brings an imperceptible smile to the lips of those who have to do with accused, indicted, and convicted persons.

"I will mention your requests to the examining judge," said the director.

"I bless you for that, monsieur," replied Herrera, raising his eyes to heaven.

As soon as the formalities were over, Carlos Herrera, supported under each arm by two municipal guards, and accompanied by a turnkey, to whom the director named the solitary cell in which he was to place the accused person, was conducted, through the subterranean labyrinth of the Conciergerie to a room that was perfectly healthy (in spite of what philanthropists have said), but without any possible external communication.

When he had been safely secured there, the jailers, the director, his clerk, and even the gendarmes looked at each other as if to ask opinions, and on all these faces a certain doubt was depicted. But on the ar-

rival of the other accused person who was now brought in, they recovered their usual air of complete indifference. Unless under very extraordinary circumstances the employés of the Conciergerie have little curiosity; criminals are to them what customers are to a barber. Thus formalities which would frighten the imagination of others are conducted by them as simply as a banker does business, and often more politely. Lucien's appearance was that of a broken-down culprit; he abandoned himself wholly and allowed them to do what they pleased with him. From the moment of his arrest at Fontainebleau, the poet considered himself ruined; he felt that the moment of expiation had come. Pale, undone, ignorant of all that had happened as to Esther, he knew only that he was the intimate companion of an escaped galley-slave. That situation was enough to make him foresee catastrophes that were worse than death. If his thoughts turned to anything resembling a plan it was to suicide. He wanted to escape at any price from the ignominy which he saw before him like a dreadful dream.

Carlos Herrera was placed, as the more dangerous of the two accused persons, in a cell built wholly of stone, which derived its light from one of those little inner courts of which there are several in the Palais. This little place served as *préau* or exercise yard for the women's section of the prison. Lucien was taken the same way, but the director had orders to show some special consideration for him, and he was placed in a cell adjoining the Pistoles.

Most persons who have never had anything to do with criminal justice have the blackest ideas about

solitary confinement. They hardly separate them from the old ideas of torture, unhealthiness of dungeons, cold walls sweating tears of dampness, brutality of jailers and coarseness of food, — accessories required for the drama. It may not be useless to say here that these exaggerations exist only on the stage, and make judges, lawyers, officials, and all who visit prisons, either out of curiosity or on errands, laugh. No doubt the time was when imprisonment was terrible. It is quite certain that indicted persons under the old Parliament, and in the times of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. were cast pell-mell into a sort of entresol above the old "guichet." The prisons were the scenes of the most awful crimes of the Revolution; it is enough merely to look at the dungeons of the Queen and that of Madame Elizabeth to be filled with the deepest horror at the old judicial system. But to-day, though philanthropy has inflicted incalculable evil on society, it has also produced some good for individuals. We owe to Napoleon our criminal code, which (more than the civil code, which stands in urgent need of reform on several points) will ever remain a noble monument to that short reign. This new code of laws closed forever an abyss of suffering. And it may be said that, putting aside the fearful mental and moral tortures of persons of the upper classes who find themselves in the grasp of the law, the action of this new power is of a gentleness and simplicity which seem all the greater because unexpected. Accused persons are certainly not lodged as they would be in their own homes, but all necessaries are found in the prisons of Paris. It is not the body that suffers; in fact, the mind is in so agitated

a state that any form of being ill at ease, even brutality if it were met with, can be easily supported. And it must be allowed that the innocent are quickly set at liberty, especially in Paris.

Lucien found, therefore, in his cell a reproduction of the first room he had occupied on his arrival in Paris. A bed like those in the poorest furnished lodgings of the Latin quarter, chairs with straw seats, a table and a few utensils completed the furniture of a room in which were sometimes confined two indicted persons if their behavior were good and their crimes not dangerous, — such, for instance, as forging and swindling This resemblance between his point of departure, bright with innocence, and his end at the lowest step of shame and degradation, was so instantly seized by a last flash of his poetic nature that he burst into tears. He wept for four hours, as insensible apparently to everything about him as a stone image, but suffering anguish from his broken hopes, his shattered social vanities, his annihilated pride; degraded in that *I* and all that *I* represented of ambition, adoration, luck, of the poet, the Parisian, the dandy, the man of pleasure, and of social privilege and success! All was crushed within him by this Icarian fall.

Carlos Herrera, for his part, walked round and round his cell, as soon as he was alone, like the bear in his cage at the Jardin des Plantes. He examined the door carefully and made sure that no hole, except the regular peep-hole called the "judas," had been bored in it. He sounded all the walls. He looked up the chimney-funnel, down which a feeble ray of light descended, and said to himself: —

"I am safe."

Then he seated himself in a corner where the eye of a turnkey applied to the peep-hole could not see him. Next he took off his wig and rapidly loosened a paper which was fastened to the inside of it. The side of this paper which the head had touched was so greasy that it looked like the integument of the wig. If Bibi-Lupin had had the idea of pulling off that wig to establish the identity of the Spanish priest with Jacques Collin, he would not have discovered the paper, so completely did it seem a part of the wig-maker's work. The other side of the paper was still sufficiently clean and white to receive a few written lines. The slow and difficult process of ungumming the paper from the wig had been begun at La Force; two hours would not suffice for the work, and the accused had already spent half of the previous day upon it. He now began by paring off the precious paper so as to get a strip of four or five lines in width; this he divided into several pieces; next, he replaced his provision of paper in the singular storehouse from which he had taken it, after having wet the layer of gum-arabic, by help of which he was able to reattach it to the wig. He then hunted through the wig for one of those pencils, slender as a pin, lately invented by Susse, which was securely gummed into the hair. He took a fragment of it long enough to write with and small enough to hide in a fold of his ear. After these preparations, made with the rapidity and firmness of execution characteristic of old convicts who are nimble as monkeys, Jacques Collin sat down upon the side of his bed and applied himself to meditate on the instructions he should give to Asia; feeling abso-

lutely certain that she would meet him somewhere, for he knew he could rely on the woman's genius.

"In my first examination," he said to himself, "I played the Spaniard, speaking broken French and appealing to his ambassador, relying on diplomatic privileges, and unable to understand what was demanded of him, — all that, interspersed with fainting-fits, gasps, hoax of dying. Better keep on that ground. My papers are all right. Asia and I can chew up Monsieur Camusot; he's not strong! It is Lucien I must think about; the question is, to give him moral strength. I *must* get at the boy, at any cost, and show him a line of conduct, or he will betray himself, and betray me, and all is lost. He must be taught what to say before his examination. And then, too, I want witnesses who'll prove that I am a priest."

Such was the moral and physical condition of the two accused persons, whose fate depended at this moment on Monsieur Camusot, examining judge for the first court of the Seine, sovereign disposer, during the time that the criminal code gave him, of the most minute details of their existence; for he alone could permit the chaplain, the doctor of the Conciergerie, or any one else, no matter who, to communicate with them.

No human power, not the King, not the Keeper of the Seals, nor the prime minister, can trench upon the power of the examining judge; no one can order him, nothing can stop him. He is a sovereign, subject only to his own conscience and the law. At this moment, when philosophers, philanthropists, and newspaper writers are incessantly occupied in diminishing social

powers, the rights conferred by our laws on examining judges have become the objects of attack, the more virulent because they are almost justified by those rights which are, let us say it here, excessive. Nevertheless, every man of judgment must admit that these rights ought not to be attacked. They might, it is true, in certain cases, be modified by an exercise of caution. But society, already much shaken by the weakness and want of intelligence of juries, — an august institution, whose duties should not be committed to any but notable men, — would be threatened with ruin if this strong column which supports our Criminal Law were broken. Arrest on suspicion is one of those terrible necessities, the social danger of which is counterbalanced by its very greatness. Besides, distrust of the magistracy is the beginning of social dissolution. Reconstruct the institution on other bases; demand, as before the Revolution, immense guarantees of property from the magistracy; but believe in it; trust in it; do not make it an image of society only to insult it. In these days, the magistrate, paid like a poor functionary, has exchanged his former dignity for a haughty and assuming manner which makes him intolerable to the equals who are given him; for haughtiness and assumption are an attempt at dignity without ground of support. There lies the evil of the present institution.

The only real amelioration that should be asked for in the exercise of the power given to examining magistrates [*juges d'instruction*], is an improvement in the houses of correction [*maisons d'arrêt*, — the prisons to which accused but not convicted persons are taken]. Those of Paris should be rebuilt, furnished, and ar-

ranged in a manner to modify the public ideas as to the just position of accused persons. The law arresting such persons is good; the execution of it is bad; and the custom of the world is to judge of a law by its execution. At the present time public opinion condemns the accused person and defends the indicted one, by a curious contradiction. Perhaps this is the result of the essentially carping or critical spirit of Frenchmen. This inconsistency in the Parisian public was one of the causes which led, as we shall see, to the catastrophe of the present drama.

To be in the secret of the terrible scenes which are enacted in the office of an examining judge; to fully understand the respective situations of the two antagonists, — the accused person and the magistrate, — the object of whose struggle is the secret guarded by the accused against the curiosity of the judge (who is called, in prisoners' slang, the Curious), we must never forget that the accused persons, who have been in solitary confinement from the moment of their arrest, are ignorant of all that the public says, all that the police and the judges know, all that the newspapers publish, as to the crime of which they are accused. Therefore to give an accused, held *au secret*, a piece of information such as that Jacques Collin had received from Asia about Lucien's arrest, was like flinging a rope to a drowning man. It resulted, as we shall see, in defeating an effort which would otherwise have ended, undoubtedly, in the ruin of the galley-slave. These points once explained, the least emotional person will tremble at the effect produced by three causes of terror, — isolation, silence, and remorse.

## XIX.

### THE PERPLEXITIES OF AN EXAMINING JUDGE AND HIS CURTAIN LECTURES.

Monsieur Camusot, son-in-law of one of the ushers of the King's cabinet, already too well known to our readers to need any explanation of his affiliations and his position, was at this moment in a state of perplexity almost equal to that of Carlos Herrera, in relation to the examination now before him. Formerly justice of a provincial court, he had been called from that position and appointed judge in Paris by the influence of the celebrated Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whose husband, equerry to the Dauphin and colonel of one of the regiments of cavalry of the Royal Guard, stood as high in the favor of the King as his wife did in that of *Madame.* For a very slight but important service rendered to the duchess on the occasion of a charge of forgery brought against the young Comte d'Esgrignon by a banker of Alençon (see "The Gallery of Antiquities") he rose from being a simple provincial justice to the station of first examining judge in Paris. For the last eighteen months he had served in the most important court of Paris; and already he had been called upon, at the request of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, to lend himself to the interests of another great lady, the Marquise d'Espard; but there he had failed. Lucien, as we heard him say at the beginning

of this history, in order to revenge himself on Madame d'Espard had shown certain facts against her to the attorney-general and the Comte de Sérizy at the time she tried to put an injunction on her husband. These two great powers once secured by the friends of the Marquis d'Espard, the wife was only saved from open blame in court by the clemency of her husband.

The previous evening, when the news of Lucien's arrest became known, Madame d'Espard had sent her brother to Madame Camusot, and Madame Camusot had gone, incontinently, to pay a visit to the Marquise d'Espard. On her return, and just before dinner, she called her husband into the privacy of their bedchamber.

"If you can send that little puppy Lucien de Rubempré before the court of assizes and in such a way that he is sure to be condemned," she whispered in his ear, "you will be made counsellor to the Royal Court."

"How so?"

"Madame d'Espard wants that poor young fellow decapitated. I had cold chills down my back as I listened to the hatred of a pretty woman."

"Pray don't meddle with legal matters," replied Camusot.

"I — meddle!" she retorted. "Any one might have listened to us, without knowing what we were talking of. The marquise and I were as delightfully hypocritical to each other as you are to me at the present moment. She said she wished to thank me for your kind efforts in her affair, for though they were unsuc-

cessful, she was none the less grateful. Then she talked of the terrible mission the law confided to an examining judge in this matter of Rubempré. 'It is frightful to think of sending a human being to the scaffold; but in this case, justice,' etc., etc. She deplored the fact that a young man brought to Paris by her cousin Madame du Châtelet, should have turned out so ill. 'This is where such corrupt women,' she said, 'as Coralie and Esther lead a man.' And then such fine tirades on religion, virtue, and charity! Madame du Châtelet had told her that Lucien deserved a hundred deaths for having almost killed his mother and sister. Then she talked of a vacancy in the Royal Court, adding that the Keeper of the Seals was a friend of hers. 'Your husband, madame' she said finally, 'has a fine occasion to distinguish himself' — There!"

"We distinguish ourselves every day by doing our duty," said Camusot.

"You'll go far! — you are a magistrate everywhere, even with your wife!" cried Madame Camusot. "*Tiens*, I have sometimes thought you were a ninny, but to-day I admire you."

The magistrate had a smile upon his lips, of the kind that belongs to a magistrate only, as the smile of a *danseuse* belongs to a *danseuse* only.

"Madame, may I come in?" said the voice of Madame Camusot's waiting-maid at the door.

"What is it?" said her mistress.

"Madame, the head maid of Madame la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse came here while madame was out, and begs madame, in the name of her mistress, to go to the hôtel de Cadigan without a moment's delay."

"Put the dinner back," said the judge's wife, remembering that the hackney-coachman was still waiting to be paid. She got back into the coach and reached the hôtel de Cadignan in twenty minutes. There she was kept waiting alone for ten minutes, in a boudoir next to the bedroom of the duchess, who presently appeared, resplendent, for she was just starting for Saint-Cloud to dine at court.

"Ah! my dear, there you are; between you and me two words will suffice."

"Yes, indeed, Madame la duchesse."

"Lucien de Rubempré is arrested; your husband examines the affair. I guarantee the innocence of that poor boy; he must be set at liberty within twenty-four hours. But that's not all. Some one wants to see Lucien privately to-morrow in prison; your husband can, if he wishes, be present provided this person does n't see him. I am faithful to those who serve me, as you know. The king expects much from the courage of his magistrates under certain grave circumstances in which he will soon be placed; I will put your husband forward, and recommend him as a man devoted to the king even at the risk of his head. Our Camusot shall be made councillor, and chief-justice somewhere, but no matter where. Adieu, I am due at court; you 'll excuse me, I know. You will not only oblige the attorney-general (whose name must not be mentioned in this affair), but also a woman who is deeply concerned about it, Madame de Sérizy. So you won't want for supporters. Now you see what confidence I place in you; I need n't urge you to — you know!"

She put a finger on her lips and disappeared.

"And I had n't time to tell her that Madame d'Espard wants to see Lucien on the scaffold!" thought the judge's wife as she returned to the hackney-coach.

She reached home in such a state of anxiety that the judge exclaimed when he saw her: —

"Amélie! what is the matter?"

"We are caught between two fires."

She related her interview with the duchess, speaking in her husband's ear, for she feared her waiting-maid might be listening at the door.

"Which of the two is most powerful?" she asked as she ended. "The marquise nearly compromised you in that foolish affair of her husband's injunction, whereas we owe all that we are to the duchess. One makes me vague promises, while the other says distinctly, 'You shall be, first, councillor, and then chief-justice.' God keep me from giving you any advice; I never meddle with legal matters; but I ought to tell you faithfully what is said at court, and what is preparing there."

"You don't know, Amélie, what the prefect of police sent me this morning; and by whom? by one of the most important men in the police of the kingdom, a man named Corentin, who tells me that the State has certain secret interests in this affair. Come to dinner, and let us go to the Variétés. We'll talk this over to-night, for I need your intelligence, — that of a judge is n't enough."

Nine-tenths of the judges will deny the influence of a wife over her husband in such circumstances; but, even if it be a marked social exception, it is very cer-

tain that it is occasionally a fact. The magistrate is like the priest; in Paris especially, where the élite of the magistracy are found, he seldom speaks of the affairs of the Palais, unless they have reached a verdict. The wives of magistrates not only affect to know nothing, but they have, all of them, sufficient sense of conventional propriety to know that they would injure their husbands if, being possessed of any secret, they allowed it to be seen. Still, on great occasions when it is a question of advancement depending on such or such a course, many wives have assisted, as Amélie was now doing, their husbands' deliberations. These exceptions of course depend entirely on the relation of the two characters in the bosom of their family, — in this household, Madame Camusot ruled her husband absolutely.

When everybody was asleep in the house, the magistrate and his wife sat down at the desk on which the judge had already laid out the papers of the case.

"Here are the memoranda the prefect of police sent me by Corentin," said Camusot.

"THE ABBÉ CARLOS HERRERA.

"This individual is, undoubtedly, the escaped convict Jacques Collin, called Trompe-la-Mort, whose last arrest was in the year 1819, and was made at the domicile of Madame Vauquer, keeper of a *pension bourgeoise* in the rue Neuve-Saint-Geneviève, where he concealed himself under the name of Vautrin."

On the margin of this memorandum, was written in the hand-writing of the prefect of police: —

"Orders have been sent by telegraph to Bibi-Lupin, chief of the detective brigade, to return to Paris immediately to assist in identifying this man, as he personally knew Jacques Collin, whom he arrested in 1819 by the help of a Demoiselle Michonneau."

The memorandum continued: —

"The boarders in the Vauquer house are still living and can be summoned to identify him.

"The so-called Carlos Herrera is the intimate friend of Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré; to whom, for a period of three years, he furnished considerable sums of money, derived, evidently, from crime.

"This intimacy, if the identity of the so-called Spanish priest and Jacques Collin be established, will prove guilty knowledge on the part of the Sieur Lucien de Rubempré."

On the margin was another note written by the prefect of police, as follows: —

"It is within my personal knowledge that the Sieur Lucien de Rubempré has deceived and misled many persons as to the source from which he derived his money."

"What do you say to that, Amélie?"

"It is very alarming," replied the wife. "Go on."

"The substitution of the Spanish priest for the convict Collin is probably the result of some crime more ably committed than that by which Cogniard made himself the Comte de Sainte-Hélène."

"Lucien de Rubempré.

"Lucien Chardon, son of an apothecary at Angoulême, and whose mother was a Demoiselle de Rubempré, is per-

mitted by an ordinance of the king to take the name of Rubempré. This ordinance was granted at the solicitation of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and the Comte de Sérizy.

"In 182–, this young man came to Paris without any means of subsistence, in the suite of Madame Sixte du Châtelet, then Madame de Bargeton, cousin of Madame d'Espard.

"Disloyal toward Madame de Bargeton, he lived after a time matrimonially with a Demoiselle Coralie, an actress, now deceased, of the Gymnase, who left Monsieur Camusot, silk-dealer in the rue des Bourdonnais, for the said Lucien Chardon.

"Plunged very soon into poverty by the insufficient means of this actress who supported him, he compromised his honorable brother-in-law, a printer at Angoulême, by uttering forged notes, for the payment of which David Séchard, the brother-in-law, was arrested during a short stay made by the said Lucien at Angoulême.

"This affair led to the flight and disappearance of Rubempré, who soon after reappeared in Paris in company with the Abbé Carlos Herrera.

"Without known means of subsistence, the Sieur Lucien spent, during the first three years after his return to Paris, not less than three hundred thousand francs, which he must have received from the so-called Abbé Carlos Herrera, — by what right or claim upon him?

"He has, moreover, recently paid more than a million for the purchase of the estate of Rubempré to meet a condition imposed on his marriage with Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu. The rupture of this marriage came about from inquiries made by the family of Grandlieu, to whom the Sieur Lucien had stated that he derived this sum from his sister and brother-in-law; these inquiries, pursued chiefly by the lawyer Derville, showed that the respectable Séchard couple were not only ignorant of the said purchase, but they even thought their brother deeply in debt. Moreover, the

property of the Séchard couple does not amount, according to their sworn declaration, to more than three hundred thousand francs.

"The Sieur Lucien lived secretly with Esther Gobseck, and it is certain that moneys paid to that demoiselle by the Baron de Nucingen were transferred by her to Lucien.

"Lucien and his companion, the escaped convict, have been enabled to maintain themselves before the world by deriving their resources from the said Esther, who was formerly a registered prostitute."

In spite of the repetition which these memoranda introduce into our account of this drama, it is necessary to report them *verbatim*, in order to show the part played by the police of Paris. The police have records [*dossiers*] of all the families and all the individuals whose lives are in any way suspicious, or whose actions are reprehensible. They are ignorant of nothing. This enormous scrap-book, this ledger of consciences, is as carefully kept as that of the Bank of France on fortunes. Just as the Bank notes down the slightest delay in the matter of payments, weighs all credits, estimates capitalists, following with attentive eye all their operations, so does the police keep record of the non-respectability of citizens. Here, the innocent have nothing to fear; the record is only of evil, but there it is complete. No matter how high-placed a family may be, it cannot secure itself from this social inquisition. It is, however, a power with discretion equal to its force. This immense quantity of reports, notes, *dossiers*, memoranda, this ocean of information, sleeps motionless, deep and calm as the sea itself. When some event occurs, some crime is committed, the

law calls on the police, and instantly a memorandum is forthcoming as to the suspected person, of which the judge takes cognizance.

These *dossiers*, however, in which the accused person's antecedents are analyzed, are mere sources of information, which remain hidden at the Prefecture; the law can make no legal use of them; they inform the law, and the law acts upon them; that is all. These records furnish what might be called the reverse side of the tapestry of crimes, their first causes — usually otherwise unknown. No jury would listen, and the whole country would rise in indignation, if any word of these memoranda were produced at the court of assizes. It is actually a case of Truth compelled to stay at the bottom of her well. No magistrate, after a dozen years' practice in Paris, is ignorant of the fact that the court of assizes and the correctional police have secret knowledge of existing evils, which are like nests where flagrant crimes have been brooded and hatched; he will own that law and justice do not punish more than half the crimes that are committed. If the public knew to what an extreme the discretion of the police agents is carried, they would revere such fine fellows as the Cheverus. People think the police crafty and Machiavellian; they are extremely kind, — but while they listen patiently to outbreaks of passion, they obtain information and they keep notes!

"We'll forget all that," said the judge, replacing the papers in a portfolio; "those are secrets between the police and the law; the judge may decide what they are worth; but Monsieur and Madame Camusot have known nothing about them."

"Why do you repeat that?" said Madame Camusot.

"Lucien is guilty," said the judge, "but of what?"

"A man who is loved by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the Comtesse de Sérizy, and Clotilde de Grandlieu is not guilty," replied Amélie; "the other man *must* have done it all."

"But Lucien is an accomplice," cried Camusot.

"Will you trust me?" said Amélie. "Restore the priest to the diplomacy of which he is such a noble ornament, declare that miserable little fool innocent, and find some other persons guilty of the crime—"

"How you run on!" said the judge, smiling. "Women fly to their ends across the laws as a bird flies through air without an obstacle."

"But," said Amélie, "that abbé, diplomat, or convict, as you please, can certainly put you on the track of other guilty persons to save himself."

"Ah!" cried Camusot, in admiration of his wife, "I'm nothing but the cap; you are the head."

"Well, then, the session is over! Come and kiss your Mélie; it is past one o'clock."

And Madame Camusot went off to bed, leaving her husband to sort his papers and his ideas preparatory to the examination he was to make on the morrow of the two accused persons.

Consequently, while the salad-baskets were making their way to the Conciergerie, bearing Jacques Collin and Lucien, the examining judge, after duly breakfasting, crossed Paris on foot, according to the simple habits of the Parisian magistracy, to reach his office, where the papers of his cases had already arrived—in this wise:—

Every examining judge has a clerk, a sort of sworn-in judicial secretary, a race which perpetuates itself without bounty, without encouragement, producing excellent persons in whom dumbness comes naturally and is absolute. An example of indiscretion on the part of these clerks is a thing unknown at the Palais from the earliest parliament until now. The perspective of a humble office at the Palais, that of registrar, and a conscience about his calling, suffice to render the clerk of an examining judge a successful rival to the grave, — for the grave gives up its secrets since the advance of chemistry. This employé is the very pen of the judge. The clerk of Monsieur Camusot, a young man twenty-two years of age, named Coquart, had gone to the judge's house in the morning and taken all the papers and notes of the cases, which he had laid out in due order in the office, while the judge was lounging along the quays, looking at the novelties in the shop windows, and asking himself, "How am I to deal with a sly dog like Jacques Collin, if Jacques Collin it is? Bibi-Lupin will certainly recognize him, and I must seem to be doing my official duty, if only for the eyes of the police. I do see such impossibilities that in my opinion it would be better to enlighten the countess and the duchess by showing them those police notes. Besides, I should be revenging my father, from whom Lucien took Coralie. By unmasking such vile scoundrels my ability will be proclaimed, and Lucien will soon be given up by all these friends of his. Well, the examination will help me to decide."

Presently he went into one of the curiosity shops, attracted by a clock of Boule.

"Not to be false to my own conscience and yet serve these two great ladies would be a masterpiece of cleverness," thought he. "Why!" he exclaimed aloud as he saw the attorney-general, "you here, Monsieur de Granville! Are you in search of coins?"

"That's a taste they say belongs to all the justiciary," replied the Comte de Granville, laughing.

Then, after looking about the shop for a few minutes as if he were finishing his search, he accompanied Camusot along the quay without any idea occurring to the judge's mind that the meeting was other than accidental.

"You are to examine Monsieur de Rubempré this morning, I am told," said the attorney-general. "Poor young man! I was very fond of him."

"There are many charges against him," said Camusot.

"Yes, I have read the police notes; but they are due, in part, to an agent who does not belong to the Prefecture, to the famous Corentin, a man who has caused more heads of innocent men to be cut off than you will send guilty to the scaffold and— But the fellow is beyond our reach. Without wishing to influence the mind of a magistrate like yourself, I cannot help calling your attention to the fact that if you could acquire a certainty that Lucien was ignorant of the girl's will, it might be shown that he had no interest, so far as he was aware, in her death."

"We are quite certain of his absence during the time the girl was poisoned," said Camusot. "He was watching on the road to Fontainebleau for the passing of Mademoiselle de Grandlieu and the Duchesse de Lenoncourt."

"Oh!" replied the attorney-general, "he still retained such hopes about his marriage with Mademoiselle de Grandlieu (so the Duchesse de Grandlieu tells me herself) that it is quite impossible to believe so intelligent a fellow would risk everything by a useless crime."

"Yes," said Camusot, "more especially if it is true that this Esther gave him all she won."

"Derville and Nucingen say she died ignorant of the inheritance, which had, however, fallen to her some time ago," said the attorney-general.

"But what do you really think about it?" asked Camusot; "there's the crime at any rate."

"A crime probably committed by the servants," replied the attorney-general.

"Unfortunately," observed Camusot, "it is more in the line of Jacques Collin, — for the Spanish priest is undoubtedly that escaped convict; he would be the most likely person to rob the girl of that seven hundred thousand francs which the Baron de Nucingen knows she had in her possession."

"Well, you will weigh it all, my dear Camusot; be prudent. The Abbé Carlos Herrera belongs to diplomacy; though, of course, an ambassador who commits a crime derives no immunity from his position. Is he, or is he not the Abbé Carlos Herrera? The whole question is there."

And Monsieur de Granville bowed with the air of a man who does not wish for an answer.

"He too wants to save Lucien," thought Camusot as he went along the quai des Lunettes, while the attorney-general entered the Palais by the cour de Harlay.

When Camusot reached the court-yard of the Conciergerie he turned into the director's office and taking that official by the arm led him to the middle of the paved court where no ear could overhear them.

"My dear monsieur," he said, "do me the kindness to go yourself to La Force and ask your colleague there if he happens to have at this moment any convicts who were at the galleys in Toulon between the years 1810 and 1815; and ascertain also whether you have any here yourself. If there are any at La Force we will transfer them here for a few days, and you must let me know if they recognize the Spanish priest as Jacques Collin, called Trompe-la-Mort."

"Very good, monsieur; but Bibi-Lupin has arrived."

"Ah!" cried the judge.

"He was at Melun. They have told him that the man is thought to be Trompe-la-Mort. He smiled with pleasure and is now waiting your orders."

"Send him to me."

The director of the Conciergerie then presented Jacques Collin's request to the judge, describing the deplorable physical condition of the man.

"I intended to examine him first," said the judge, "but not on account of his health. I received a note this morning from the director of La Force. It seems that the sly dog, who says he has been at the point of death for twenty-four hours, slept so soundly in his cell at La Force, that he never heard the doctor whom the director sent to him. The doctor did not feel his pulse, but let him sleep; which proves, perhaps, that his conscience is as sound as his health. I shall only believe in his illness sufficiently to let me study his game," said Monsieur Camusot, smiling.

"One learns some new thing every day from these prisoners," remarked the director of the Conciergerie.

The Prefecture of the police communicates with the Conciergerie and with the sitting magistrates by means of underground passages. This explains the marvellous rapidity with which the administration and the judges of the court of assizes can obtain information during sessions. So that when Monsieur Camusot reached the head of the staircase which led to his office he found Bibi-Lupin, who had hurried up through the Salle des Pas-Perdus.

"What zeal!" said the judge, smiling.

"Ah! if it's *he*," replied the detective, "you'll see a terrible row in the yard should there happen to be any old galley-slaves confined here."

"Why so?"

"Because Trompe-la-Mort has filched their funds, and I *know* they have sworn to exterminate him."

"They" meant the convicts whose money, confided for the last twenty years to Trompe-la-Mort, had been spent on Lucien.

"Can you find witnesses of his last arrest?"

"Give me two summonses, and I promise to bring them to you to-day."

"Coquart," said the judge, taking off his gloves and putting his hat and cane in a corner, "fill out two summonses as monsieur directs."

He looked at himself in the mirror over the mantelshelf on which stood, in place of a clock, a ewer and wash-basin, with a bottle of water and a glass on one side, and a lamp on the other. The judge rang the bell. An usher came, after a time.

"Are there any persons waiting?" asked the judge of the usher, whose business it was to receive witnesses, examine their summonses and place them in the order of their arrival.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Take their names, and bring me the list."

Examining judges, being chary of their time, are sometimes obliged to carry on several examinations at once. That is the reason of the long detention of witnesses who are taken to the room occupied by the ushers, into which the bells of all the examining judges ring.

"After you have done that," added the judge to his usher, "you will go and fetch me the Abbé Carlos Herrera."

"Ha!" cried Bibi-Lupin. "I was told he had turned himself into a priest and a Spaniard. Pooh! that's only a new edition of Collet."

"There is nothing new under the sun," remarked Camusot, signing two of those formidable summonses, which trouble the mind of every one, even those of the most innocent witnesses, whom the law commands to appear, under heavy penalties if they disobey.

## XX.

### ASIA AT WORK.

HALF an hour earlier, Jacques Collin had ended his deep deliberations and was fully under arms. Nothing can better depict this figure of the people in revolt against the laws than the few lines which he had written on his greasy bits of paper.

The meaning of the first was as follows, for it was in a language arranged between himself and Asia, a corruption of thieves' Latin, — hieroglyphics applied to ideas: —

"Go to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse or to Madame de Sérizy. One of them must see Lucien before his examination and give him the paper here enclosed. Find our two thieves; tell them to be ready to play the part I shall indicate to them. Go to Rastignac; tell him, from him whom he met at the masked ball, to come here and certify that the Abbé Carlos Herrera does not in any way resemble Jacques Collin, arrested at Vauquer's. Obtain the same of Doctor Bianchon. Set *Lucien's two women* at work in the same direction."

On the enclosed paper was written in good French:

"Lucien, admit nothing as to me. I must be to you the Abbé Carlos Herrera. Not only is this your justification, but, if you show firmness now, you will gain seven millions and save your honor."

These two bits of paper, gummed together on the written side so that they looked like a fragment of the same sheet, were rolled up with an art peculiar to those who brood at the galleys over means of escape. The whole took the form and consistence of those wads of wax which thrifty women apply to their needles when the eyes are broken.

"If I am examined first, we are saved; but if it is the young one, all is lost," he thought as he sat waiting.

The tension was so cruel that the strong man's face was covered with a white sweat. This stupendous being saw the True in his sphere of crime, as Molière in his sphere of dramatic poesy, as Cuvier among vanished creations. Genius is, everywhere, Intuition. Below this phenomenon all other remarkable things are done by talent. In this consists the difference which separates persons of the first order from persons of the second order. Crime has its men of genius. Jacques Collin, brought to bay, applied a supreme effort of human intelligence against the steel armor of the law.

As he heard the heavy grating of the locks and bolts of his door Carlos Herrera resumed the attitude and appearance of a dying man. In this he was aided by the intoxicating sense of joy the jailer's steps, pausing before his door, had caused him. He knew not by what means Asia would reach him, but he felt certain he should see her on his way to the judge's office, after the promise she had given him at the arcade of Saint-Jean.

Asia, as soon as that fortunate meeting was over,

had gone to the Grève, pushing the little hand-cart rapidly to the bottom of the embankment, where she hid it until such time as its true owner, now drinking the price of its hire in one of the low wineshops of the neighborhood, should return to find her property in the place agreed upon. Asia then took a hackney-coach on the place de l'H tel de Ville, saying to the driver, "To the Temple! and quick, too! *Il y a gras* — there 's fat in it."

A woman dressed as Asia now was could easily, and without exciting the slightest curiosity, be lost in the throng of that vast hall where all the rags of Paris accumulate, where swarm all ambulating peddlers, and the female dealers in old clothes gabble. The two accused persons were scarcely in their cells before she was being reclothed in a damp little room over one of those horrible shops where are sold the remains of materials stolen by tailors and dressmakers. It was kept by an old spinster called La Romette, from her baptismal name of Jéromette. La Romette was to the *marchandes de toilette* what those resourceful women were themselves to other women, called respectable but embarrassed, — a usurer at a hundred per cent.

"My dear," said Asia on arriving, "I must be dressed. Make me a baroness of the faubourg Saint-Germain at the very least. Harness me up quick!" she cried; "my feet are in boiling oil! You know the sort of gown I want. Out with your rouge; find me some real lace, and a watch and a lot of charms to sparkle! Send your girl to fetch a coach and let it wait at the back door."

"Yes, madame," said the old maid, with the sub-

mission and haste of a servant in presence of her mistress.

If this scene had had a witness he would have seen at once that the woman concealed under the name of Asia was the proprietor of the place.

"They 've brought me diamonds," said La Romette as she was doing Asia's hair.

"Are they stolen?"

"I think so."

"Then, whatever the profit may be, my dear, deprive yourself of it. We have the Curious to fear for some time yet."

We may now imagine how Asia appeared in the Salle des Pas-Perdus of the Palais de Justice, with a summons in her hand, asking to be guided through the corridors and staircases to the office of Monsieur Camusot, about a quarter of an hour before the arrival of that judge.

She no longer resembled herself. After washing off, like an actress, her old woman's face, and putting on rouge and white paint, she had covered her head with an admirable blond wig. Dressed precisely like a lady of the faubourg Saint-Germain, she appeared to be about forty years of age, for she had covered her face with a black lace veil. A corset laced ruthlessly tight, compressed her culinary figure. Very well-gloved, wearing a bustle of considerable dimensions, she exhaled as she passed along, an agreeable odor of maréchale powder. Dangling a bag with a gold clasp in her hand, she divided her attention between the walls of the Palais, which she had entered apparently for the first time, and the chain of a pretty King Charles

spaniel. A dowager of this kind was soon remarked by the black-robed denizens of the Salle des Pas-Perdus.

Besides the briefless barristers who sweep that hall with their gowns and call distinguished lawyers by their baptismal names to give the idea that they belong to the aristocracy of their order, there can often be seen in that huge lounging-place patient young fellows at the beck and call of busy lawyers, dancing attendance on the chance of a case coming up and requiring to be argued when the barrister employed upon it is not at hand. It would be a curious sight could we lay bare the varieties beneath these black gowns which walk about this immense hall in threes and sometimes in fours, producing by their conversation the mighty hum which echoes through this space so rightly named the Hall of the Wasted Steps, — for this incessant tramping wears out a lawyer fully as much as the prodigalities of speech. Asia had counted on meeting these loungers of the Palais; she laughed under her breath at the witticisms she overheard, and finally attracted the attention of Massol, a licentiate not as yet admitted to the bar, and more interested in reporting for the "Gazette des Tribunaux" than in searching for clients. He now, with a smile, offered his services to the lady so richly dressed and agreeably perfumed.

Asia, in a mincing head voice, explained to this obliging young gentleman that she was there on the summons of a judge named Camusot.

"Ah! in the affair Rubempré?"

The case was already named!

"Well, it is not myself, but my maid — a girl who calls herself Europe. I had her just twenty-four hours

and then she ran away when she saw my porter bring me this summons."

Then, like all old women whose life is passed in gossiping by their firesides, and instigated also by Massol, she recounted, with many parentheses, several of the misfortunes of her life, and the death of her husband, one of the three directors of the Territorial office. She consulted the young lawyer as to whether she ought to sue her son-in-law, the Comte de Gross-Narp, who made her daughter very unhappy, and asked whether the law allowed her to dispose of her fortune. Massol could not, in spite of his efforts, make out whether the summons was for the mistress or the maid. He had only glanced at the well-known paper, which, to save time, is printed, so that the clerks and judges are only obliged to fill in the blank lines left for the names of witnesses, their address, and the hour at which they are cited to appear. Asia made her companion explain to her the Palais (which she knew even better than he knew it himself), and finally ended by asking him at what hour Monsieur Camusot would come.

"Well, in general, the examining judges begin their inquiry at ten o'clock."

"It is a quarter to ten," she said, looking at a pretty little watch, a triumph of the art of jewelry, which made Massol think to himself: —

"Where the devil does fortune poke itself."

By this time, Asia had come as far as the dark hall looking out upon the court of the conciergerie, where the ushers all assembled. Seeing the entrance to the prison through the single window, she exclaimed: —

"What are those great walls over there?"

"That is the Conciergerie."

"Ah! the Conciergerie, where our poor queen — How I should like to see her dungeon!"

"That is impossible, Madame la baronne," said the young lawyer, who had given his arm to the dowager. "It requires permits, which are very difficult to obtain."

"They tell me," she went on, "that Louis XVIII. has himself written, in Latin, an inscription on the walls of Marie Antoinette's cell."

"Yes, Madame la baronne."

"I should like to know Latin that I might learn the words of that inscription. Do you think that Monsieur Camusot would give me a permit?"

"That is not in his province. But he could accompany you."

"Could he leave his examinations?" she asked.

"Oh," said Massol, "the accused could wait."

"*Tiens!* yes, they are accused, that's true," said Asia, artlessly. "But I know Monsieur de Granville, your attorney-general."

This information produced a magical effect upon the lawyer and the ushers who overheard it.

"Ah! you know the attorney-general," said Massol, who now thought it worth while to discover the name and address of the *client* whom fate had brought him.

"Yes, I often meet him at the Sérizys'. Monsieur de Sérizy is a friend of his, and Madame de Sérizy is a relation of mine, through the Ronquerolles."

"If Madame would like to step down to the Conciergerie," said an usher, "she —"

"Yes, to be sure," said Massol.

The ushers allowed the lawyer and the baroness to go down the staircase, and they were soon in the guard-room where the stairway from the Souricière ends, — a place well-known to Asia, and which forms, as we have already shown, a post of observation through which every one from the prison must pass.

"Ask these gentlemen if Monsieur Camusot has come," she said, observing the gendarmes who were playing cards on a bench.

"Yes, madame, he has just come up from the Souricière."

"Souricière!" she exclaimed, "what is that? — Ah! how stupid I was not to have gone directly to the Comte de Granville — I have n't the time now. Take me, if you please, to Monsieur Camusot before he gets to work."

"Oh, madame, you have plenty of time to see Monsieur Camusot," said Massol. "If you send in your card he will spare you the annoyance of waiting in the antechamber among the witnesses. We have some consideration at the Palais for ladies like you. You have your cards with you?"

At this moment Asia and her lawyer were exactly in front of the window in the guard-room which commanded the office of the Conciergerie. The gendarmes tolerated for a time the presence of a baroness accompanied by a lawyer. Asia let the latter relate to her the various horrible things that all young lawyers have to tell about what happens in that fateful office called "le guichet." She refused to believe that the "toilet of death" was made behind the iron railings which he pointed out to her; but the corporal of gendarmes confirmed the fact.

"How I should like to see that!" she said.

She stood there, chattering with the corporal and the lawyer till she saw Jacques Collin, supported by two gendarmes and preceded by Monsieur Camusot's usher, come out of the "guichet."

"Ah! here comes the prison chaplain; perhaps he is going to prepare one of those unfortunate —"

"No, madame," said the corporal, "that is an accused person who is coming to be examined."

"What is he accused of?"

"He is implicated in a poisoning case."

"Oh! I'd like to see him."

"You can't stay here," said the corporal, "for he is in solitary confinement and he has to pass through this guard-room. Here, madame, go through this door to the staircase."

"Thank you, monsieur," said the baroness, going towards the door as if to rush down the staircase; then she seemed to lose her head and cried out, "But where am I?"

Her voice was loud and it reached the ears of Jacques Collin; she meant in this way to prepare him to see her. The corporal rushed at the baroness, seized her round the waist, and dragged her into the midst of four or five gendarmes, who had sprung up like one man; for in this guard-room they distrust everybody. It was an arbitrary act, but a necessary one. The lawyer himself had exclaimed, "Oh, madame! madame!" in frightened tones, so much did he fear being compromised.

The Abbé Carlos Herrera, almost fainting, was allowed to sit down for a moment in the guard-room.

"Poor man!" said the baroness. "Is he guilty?"

These words, though said in the ear of the young lawyer, were heard by every one, for the silence of death reigned in the guard-room. As privileged persons were occasionally permitted to see famous criminals as they passed from the prison through this guard-room, the gendarmes and the judge's usher who had charge of the abbé made no observation on the presence of the baroness. Besides, thanks to the promptness with which the corporal had grasped her person to prevent any communication between the accused and the visitor, a very reassuring space was left between them.

"Let us go on!" murmured Carlos Herrera, making an effort to rise.

At this instant the little ball rolled from his sleeve, and the place where it stopped was noticed by the baroness, whose veil gave freedom to her eyes. Damp and greasy, it did not roll away; for these little points, apparently insignificant, had all been calculated by Jacques Collin to produce success. When the prisoner had been taken up the stairs, Asia dropped her bag in a natural manner, stooped quickly to recover it, and as she did so picked up the ball, the color of which, being that of the dust and mud on the floor, kept it from being seen.

"Ah!" she said, "it wrung my heart to see him. He must be dying."

"Or trying to appear so," said the corporal.

"Monsieur," said Asia to the lawyer, "please conduct me at once to Monsieur Camusot; I have come here on this very business; he may be very glad to see me before he examines that poor abbé."

The lawyer and the baroness left the guard-room with its fuliginous and oleaginous walls; but when they reached the top of the staircase, the baroness gave a loud exclamation: —

"My dog!" she cried. "Oh! monsieur, my poor dog!"

And she darted like a crazy woman into the Salle des Pas-Perdus, asking every one if they had seen her dog. She reached the Galerie des Marchandes and ran toward a stairway calling out: "I see him! There he is!"

This staircase was the one that leads to the cour de Harlay, through which, her comedy played, she passed to the quai des Orfévres, where she flung herself into one of the hackney-coaches which stand there, and disappeared, carrying with her Europe's summons and the greasy wad of paper.

"Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc!" she cried to the driver.

Asia could count on the inviolable secrecy of a certain dealer in second-hand finery named Madame Nourrisson, also known under the name of Madame de Sainte-Estève, who lent her not only her individuality but also her shop, — where Nucingen had bargained for the delivery of Esther. Asia was there as though she were at home, for she did actually occupy a room in Madame Nourrisson's apartment. She paid the fare, and went up to her chamber bowing to Madame Nourrisson in a manner to let her know she had no time to say a word.

Secure from prying eyes, Asia began to unfold the papers with all the care that learned men give to unrolling a palimpsest. Having read the instructions,

she judged it necessary to copy the note to Lucien on clean note-paper. Then she went down to Madame Nourrisson's room and kept her talking, while a girl from the shop ran to call a coach from the Boulevard des Italiens. In the course of her talk, Asia got from Madame Nourrisson the addresses of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy, which Madame Nourrisson knew through her intercourse with their waiting-maids.

These various trips and minute occupations took over two hours. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who lived in the upper part of the rue Saint-Honoré, kept Madame de Sainte-Estève waiting more than an hour; though the maid after knocking had passed in, through the door of the boudoir, the card of "Madame de Sainte-Estève," on which Asia had written, "Come on urgent business concerning Lucien."

At the first glance which she cast on the duchess she saw that her visit had been ill-timed, and she hastened to excuse herself on the ground of the peril that threatened Lucien.

"Who are you?" asked the duchess, without using any form of politeness and staring at Asia, who might be taken for a baroness by Maître Massol in the Salle des Pas-Perdus, but who, in the little salon of the hôtel de Cadignan, presented the effect of a spot of cart-grease on a white satin dress.

"I am a *marchande de toilette*, Madame la duchesse, — for in circumstances like these people look for assistance to those whose business compels them to be absolutely discreet. I have never betrayed any one, and God knows how many great ladies have trusted

their diamonds to me for months and borrowed false ones like their own—"

"You have another name?" said the duchess, smiling at a recollection this answer brought to her mind.

"Yes, Madame la duchesse, I am Madame de Sainte-Estève on great occasions, but my name in business is Madame Nourrisson."

"Ah! very good," said the duchess, changing her tone.

"I can," continued Asia, "do great services; I have many secrets of husbands as well as of wives. I have had much to do with Monsieur de Marsay, whom Madame la duchesse—"

"Enough! enough!" cried the duchess; "let us think of Lucien."

"If Madame la duchesse wants to save him she must have the courage not to lose time in dressing herself; besides, she could hardly look better than she does now. You are pretty enough to eat, though an old woman says it! Don't order your carriage, madame; come with me—I have a coach here—to Madame de Sérizy if you wish to avoid greater evils than even the loss of that cherubim."

"Go on, I'll follow you," said the duchess after a moment's hesitation. "Between us both," she reflected, "we ought to give her the courage to act."

In spite of the infernal activity of this Dorine of the galleys, three o'clock was striking as she entered, with the duchess, Madame de Sérizy's hôtel in the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. But there, thanks to the duchess, not a moment was lost. They were both shown immediately into the presence of the countess

who was lying on a sofa in a miniature cottage in a garden redolent of the perfume of flowers.

"This is good," thought Asia, looking about her; "no one can overhear us here."

"Ah! Diane, I shall die! what have you done?" cried the countess, springing up like a fawn, and seizing the duchess by the shoulders she burst into tears.

"Come, come, Léontine, there are occasions when women like us should act and not weep," said the duchess, forcing the countess to sit down beside her on the sofa.

Asia studied the countess with that glance peculiar to depraved old women, which travels over the soul of another woman as the scalpel of a surgeon round a wound. Jacques Collin's companion recognized the signs of the rarest sentiment ever found in a woman of the world, — a true grief, the grief that ploughs ineffaceable furrows in the heart and face. The countess had counted forty-five spring-tides. At this moment there was not the slightest coquetry in her attire; her muslin peignoir rumpled and creased showed her figure without the support of a corset. The eyes with their black circles and the stained cheeks proved plainly enough her bitter weeping. No belt secured the wrapper. The hair gathered into a knot under a lace cap had not been combed for twenty-four hours and revealed its thin short braid and straggling locks in all their poverty; she had even forgotten to put on her false hair.

"Madame," said Asia, "there is no time to lose —"

Léontine looked up and saw the woman for the first time and made a movement of fear.

"Who is it, Diane?" she said.

"Whom do you suppose I should bring here, but some one devoted to Lucien and ready to serve us?"

"Madame, this is no time to whine, as the duchess said," cried the terrible Asia, taking the countess by the arm and shaking her. "If you want to save him there's not a moment to be lost. He is innocent; I swear it on the bones of my mother!"

"Oh yes! indeed he is," cried the countess, looking kindly at the horrible creature.

"But," continued Asia, "if Monsieur Camusot examines him *the wrong way*, he can make him out guilty in a couple of sentences. If you have the power to get into the Conciergerie and speak to him, go instantly — instantly — and give him this paper. If you do that, to-morrow he will be at liberty, — I guarantee it."

"But," said the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, "if it is all-important to prevent Monsieur Camusot from examining him we can do that by writing him a line and sending it at once to the Palais by your footman, Léontine; you can go to see Lucien later."

"Then let us go into the house," said Madame de Sérizy.

## XXI.

### DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND — WHICH WINS?

HERE is what was happening at the Palais while Lucien's protectresses were obeying the orders sent to them by Jacques Collin.

The gendarmes placed the half-fainting man upon a chair facing the window in Monsieur Camusot's office; the judge was sitting in his arm-chair before his desk; Coquart, pen in hand, occupied a little table a few paces from the judge.

The arrangement of the office of an examining judge is not an accidental matter, and if it is not intentionally done it must be owned that chance has treated justice like a sister. These magistrates resemble painters, — they require a clear and equable light coming from the north; for the faces of their criminals are pictures that must be constantly studied. Therefore nearly all examining judges place their desks like that of Camusot, turning their own backs to the window and consequently exposing the faces of those they examine to the light. Not one of them, after exercising his functions for six months fails to assume an absent-minded, indifferent air during an examination — unless he wears spectacles. It was to a sudden change of countenance detected by this means, and caused by an unanswerable question asked suddenly, that Castaing's

guilt was discovered at the very moment when, after long deliberation with the attorney-general, the judge was about to let loose that criminal on society for want of proof. This little detail will show to the least perceptive persons how keen, dramatic, interesting, curious, and terrible a struggle is that of a criminal examination, — a struggle without witnesses, but always written down. God knows how much remains upon the paper of these icy-burning scenes, in which a glance, a tone, a tremor of the face, the slightest touch of color given by a feeling, — all is perilous, like the peril of savages watching and stalking each other to discovery and death. The written record, the *procès-verbal*, of such a scene is but the ashes of a conflagration.

"What are your true names?" asked Camusot of Jacques Collin.

"Don Carlos Herrera, canon of the Royal Chapter of Toledo; secret envoy of his Majesty Ferdinand VII."

It is to be remarked here that Carlos Herrera spoke French "like a Spanish cow," as the popular saying is; murdering it in a way to make his answers almost unintelligible and necessitating constant repetition; but we spare our readers the annoyance and delay of deciphering his words as pronounced.

"You have papers to prove the status which you claim?" asked the judge.

"Yes, monsieur: a passport, a letter from his Catholic Majesty authorizing my mission — But you could send immediately to the Spanish Embassy two lines, which I will write before you, and I should be claimed there. If you want further proof, I will write

to His Eminence the Grand Almoner of France, and he would send his private secretary to identify me."

"Do you still pretend that you are very ill?" said Camusot. "If you had really endured the sufferings you have complained of since your arrest you would have died by this time," remarked the judge, ironically.

"You are trying the courage of an innocent man, and exhausting the strength of his temperament," replied the accused, gently.

"Coquart, ring the bell, and call for the physician of the Conciergerie and his attendant. We shall be obliged to take off your coat and proceed to verify the mark on your shoulder," resumed Camusot.

"Monsieur, I am in your hands."

The accused then asked if the judge would have the kindness to explain what that mark was, and why they should look for it on his shoulder. The judge expected the question.

"You are suspected of being Jacques Collin, an escaped convict, whose audacity flinches at nothing, not even the sacrilege of making yourself a priest," said the judge quickly, fastening his eyes upon those of the prisoner.

Jacques Collin did not quiver or change color; he continued calm and assumed an air of natural curiosity as he looked at Camusot.

"I! monsieur, a convict? May the Order to which I belong and God forgive you for that mistake. Tell me all that I ought to do to keep you from persisting in so grave an insult to the rights of individuals, to the Church, and to the king my master."

The judge explained, without replying to the ac-

cused, that if he were branded on the shoulder, as the law required in the case of convicts sentenced to the galleys, the letters would reappear when his shoulder was struck.

'Ah, monsieur," said the abbé, "it would be sad indeed if my devotion to the royal cause should now become an injury to me."

"Explain yourself," said the judge; "you are here for that purpose."

"Monsieur, I have many scars on my back and shoulders, for I was shot in the back as a traitor to my country, whereas I was faithful to my king; this was done by the Constitutionals, who left me for dead."

"You were shot, and still live!" said Camusot.

"I had friends among the soldiery, to whom pious persons gave money; they placed me at such a distance that their balls were half spent; the soldiers aimed for the back. That is a fact to which his Excellency the Spanish ambassador can certify."

"This devil of a fellow has an answer to everything. So much the better," thought Camusot, who was making himself severe merely to satisfy the requirements of the law and the police. "How is it that a man of your character was found in the house of Baron de Nucingen's mistress? — and such a mistress, a former prostitute!"

"The reason that I was found in that house is this, monsieur," replied Herrera — "But before I tell you the reason, I ought to explain that I had no sooner set foot on the staircase than I was seized with a fit and had no time to speak to the young woman. I had received information of her design to kill herself,

and as this matter concerned the interests of Lucien de Rubempré, for whom I have an affection the motives of which are sacred to me, I went to the house to dissuade that poor creature from the act to which her despair was leading her. I meant to tell her that Lucien would certainly fail in his efforts to marry Mademoiselle de Grandlieu; that she herself had inherited a great fortune; and I hoped in this way to give her courage to live. I feel certain, monsieur, that I was made the victim of the political secrets intrusted to me. From the way in which I was suddenly overcome, I believe I had been poisoned that morning; but the vigor of my constitution saved me. I know that for a long time an agent of the political police has dogged me, and he may be endeavoring to implicate me in some dangerous affair. If when I was arrested you had complied with my request for a doctor you would have had the proof of what I now tell you about my health. Believe me, monsieur, there are persons, placed far above us, who have a strong interest in identifying me with some criminal in order to be rid of me. It is not all gain to serve kings and princes; they have their own pettiness, — the Church alone is perfect."

It is impossible to render the play of feature and expression on the face of the speaker, who took, intentionally, ten minutes to deliver this tirade, slowly, sentence by sentence. The whole was so thoroughly natural and probable, especially the allusion to Corentin, that the judge was shaken.

"Will you confide in me the cause of your affection for Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré?" he asked.

"Can you not guess it? I am sixty years of age,

monsieur, and — I beg you not to write this down — he is — Must I, absolutely?"

"It is for your interest, and above all for that of Lucien de Rubempré, to tell the truth."

"Then — he is — Oh, heaven! — he is my son," he murmured.

And he fainted.

"Don't write that, Coquart," whispered Camusot.

Coquart rose to get a bottle of pungent vinegar.

"If it is Jacques Collin, he's a great comedian," thought Camusot.

Coquart made Herrera inhale the vinegar, while the judge sat watching him with the mingled penetration of a lynx and a magistrate.

"You must make him take off his wig," said Camusot, waiting till the man had recovered his senses.

Collin heard the words and trembled inwardly, for he knew what a base expression his whole countenance would then assume.

"If you have not the strength to take off your wig — yes, Coquart, take it off," said the judge to his clerk.

Herrera advanced his head to the clerk with touching resignation; but no sooner was the head without its covering than it was horrible to behold, — the man's real character was seen. The sight plunged Camusot into great uncertainty. While awaiting the physician, he began to classify and arrange the papers and other articles seized in Lucien's apartments. After searching poor Esther's rooms in the rue Saint-Georges the police had continued their inquiry at the house on the quai Malaquais.

"You have in your hands the letters of the Comtesse de Sérizy," said Carlos Herrera. "I do not see why you should have seized Lucien de Rubempré's papers."

"Lucien de Rubempré, suspected of being your accomplice, is arrested," said the judge, anxious to see what effect that news would have on the accused.

"You have done a great wrong, for Lucien is as innocent as I am myself," said Herrera, without exhibiting the slightest emotion.

"That we shall see; at present we are establishing your identity," said the judge, surprised at the tranquillity of the man. "If you are really Don Carlos Herrera, that will immediately alter the situation of Lucien Chardon."

"Yes, she was indeed Madame Chardon — that is, Mademoiselle de Rubempré," murmured Carlos. "Ah! it was one of the greatest faults of my life."

He raised his eyes to heaven, and, by the way in which his lips moved, he seemed to be saying a fervent prayer.

"But," added the judge, "if you are Jacques Collin, Lucien has, knowingly, been the companion of an escaped convict, a sacrilegious impostor, and the crimes of which the law suspects him become more than probable."

Carlos Herrera was iron as he listened to this speech, most ably delivered by the judge. For all answer he raised his hands with a gesture that was nobly sorrowful at the words "knowingly" and "escaped convict."

"Monsieur l'abbé," said the judge, with extreme politeness, "if you are indeed Don Carlos Herrera, you will pardon us for all we have been forced to inflict upon you in the interests of justice and truth."

Jacques Collin guessed the trap that was here set for him, by the mere inflection of the judge's voice as he said the words "Monsieur l'abbé," and his countenance remained unmoved. Camusot expected a movement of joy, which would have been an indication of a criminal's ineffable delight at having deceived his judge; on the contrary, the hero of the galleys was under the arms of a dissimulation that was more than Machiavellian.

"I am a diplomatist, and I belong to an Order the vows of which are most austere," replied the abbé, with apostolic gentleness. "I understand all, and I am used to suffering. I should be free already if your police had found the hiding-place of my private papers; for I see they have seized none but those that are insignificant."

This was a finishing blow for Camusot. Carlos Herrera had already counterbalanced by his ease and simplicity all the suspicions that the sight of his bald head had renewed.

"Where are those papers?"

"I will show the place if you will kindly allow your delegate who takes me to be accompanied by a secretary of legation from the Spanish Embassy on whom you can rely, who must receive them; for the matter concerns my duty. These papers are diplomatic, and contain secrets compromising the late King Louis XVIII. Ah! monsieur, you had better — However, you are the sole judge; besides, my ambassador, to whom I shall appeal in all this, will appreciate the situation."

At this moment the physician and his assistant entered the office, after being announced by the usher.

"Good morning, monsieur," said Camusot. "I have called you to examine the condition of the accused person here present. He says he is poisoned, and declares he has been almost at the point of death since day before yesterday. See if there is any danger in undressing him in order to verify the existence of a mark on his shoulder."

The doctor took the prisoner's hand, felt his pulse, asked to see his tongue, and looked him over very attentively. The inspection lasted about ten minutes.

"This person," said the physician, "has suffered very much; but he now has great strength."

"That factitious strength is due, monsieur, to the nervous excitement of my present strange position," said Jacques Collin, with all the dignity of a bishop.

"That may be," said the doctor.

At a sign from the judge, the prisoner was undressed; with the exception of his trousers all else was taken off, even his shirt; and every one present could admire the hairy torso of Cyclopean power. Here was the Farnese Hercules without his colossal exaggeration.

"For what does Nature destine men of such a build as that?" said the doctor to Camusot.

The usher now returned with that species of sabre made of ebony which has been from time immemorial among the insignia of their functions and is called a rod. With it he is struck several blows at the place where the executioner must have applied the fatal brand. Seventeen scars then appeared, capriciously scattered; but, in spite of the care with which the back was examined the shape of no letter could be

made out. The usher called attention, however, to the fact that the bar of the T was indicated by two holes exactly as far apart as the length of the bar required, and that another hole was at the exact place for the bottom of the same letter.

"But all that is very vague," said Camusot, noticing the doubt expressed on the doctor's face.

Carlos Herrera now requested that the same thing should be done to the other shoulder and to the back. Fifteen or more other scars reappeared, which the doctor made a note of at the request of the Spaniard, and he declared that the whole back had been so riddled with wounds that the branding could not now be discovered were it there.

A messenger from the Prefecture of police here entered the room and gave a note to Monsieur Camusot, requesting an answer. After reading it, the judge crossed over to Coquart and whispered something in his ear, but so low that no other ear could hear it. Only, from a single glance in his direction, Jacques Collin felt certain that the message came from the police.

"Corentin is on my heels, I know that," thought he. "I wish I could see Asia again."

After signing a paper written by Coquart, the judge put it in an envelope and gave it to the messenger. Then he motioned to the doctor and his assistant, who re-dressed the prisoner, and retired, together with the usher. Camusot sat down to a desk and played with a pen.

"You have an aunt," he said, abruptly addressing the accused.

"An aunt?" echoed Carlos Herrera in surprise. "Monsieur, I have no relations; I am the unrecognized son of the late Duke of Ossuna."

To himself he said, "They burn!" — in allusion to the game of hide and seek, an infantile image of the terrible struggle between justice and criminals.

"Pooh!" said Camusot. "Come, you have an aunt, — Mademoiselle Jacqueline Collin; whom you placed as cook with Mademoiselle Esther under the fantastic name of Asia."

Herrera gave a careless shrug to his shoulders wholly in keeping with the look of curiosity he showed on hearing this statement of the judge, who was watching him with sharp attention.

"Take care," said Camusot. "Listen to me carefully."

"I am listening, monsieur."

"Your aunt is a procuress in the Temple; her business is carried on by a Demoiselle Paccard, sister of a convict, but a very worthy woman, called La Romette. The police are on your aunt's traces, and in a few hours we shall have positive proofs. The woman is very devoted to you — "

"Go on, monsieur," said Herrera, composedly, when Camusot paused as if for a reply; "I am listening to you."

"Your aunt, who is about five years older than you, was formerly the mistress of Marat, of odious memory. It was from that bloody source that the nucleus of her present fortune was derived. According to information which I possess, she is a very clever receiver of stolen goods; for as yet no proofs have been obtained

against her. After Marat's death she belonged, as appears from reports which I hold in my hand, to a chemist condemned to death, in the year VIII., for coining false money. She was a witness on his trial. It was through this intimacy that she obtained her knowledge of poisons. She was a procuress from the year IX. to 1806. From 1807 to 1809 she was in prison for the crime of leading minors into debauchery. You were then being sought for the crime of forgery. You had left the banking-house in which your aunt had placed you as clerk, thanks to the education you had received and to your aunt's influence with personages to whose depravity she furnished victims. All this does not comport with the grandeurs of the Dukes of Ossuna. Do you persist in your denials?"

Carlos Herrera listened to Monsieur Camusot, thinking the while of his happy childhood in the school of the Oratorians; a meditation which gave him a truly astonished air at the judge's words. In spite of Camusot's clever probing, he was unable to bring a single quiver to that placid countenance.

"If the explanation that I gave you in the beginning has been correctly written down," said Herrera, "you should read it over. I have no change to make in it. I did not actually enter the courtesan's house; how could I know her cook? I am a total stranger to the persons of whom you speak."

"We shall proceed, in spite of your denials, to confront you with persons in such a way as to diminish your assurance."

"A man who has once been shot can endure anything," replied Herrera, gently.

Camusot returned to his study of the papers while awaiting the arrival of the detective officer whose coming had been announced to him. It was now half-past eleven; the examination had begun at ten. Presently the usher entered and announced to the judge in a low voice that Bibi-Lupin had arrived.

"Let him come in," replied Monsieur Camusot.

As he entered, Bibi-Lupin — from whom the judge expected the exclamation, "That is he!" — stopped short in surprise; he did not recognize the face of his "customer" in that pock-marked visage. This hesitation struck the judge forcibly.

"It is certainly his figure, his corpulence," said the detective, — "Ah! yes, that's you, Jacques Collin!" he exclaimed, examining the eyes, the cut of the brow, and the ears. "There are some things that can't be disguised. That is certainly he, Monsieur Camusot. Jacques has a scar from the cut of a knife on his left arm; make him take off his coat and you will see it."

Again the prisoner's coat was taken off; Bibi-Lupin rolled up the sleeve of his shirt and showed the mark.

"It was a shot," said Carlos Herrera; "here are several other scars."

"Ha! that's his voice!" cried Bibi-Lupin.

"Your certainty," said the judge, "is merely an opinion; it is not proof."

"I know that," said Bibi-Lupin, humbly. "But I will get you witnesses. I have brought with me now one of the boarders in the Maison Vauquer, where I formerly arrested him," he added, looking fixedly at the prisoner.

The placid face never changed.

"Let that person come in," said Monsieur Camusot, whose annoyance was perceptible in spite of his apparent indifference.

This fact was perceived by Jacques Collin, who counted little on the sympathy of an examining judge; and he dropped into a sort of apathy, produced by the intense meditation to which he gave himself up in searching for the cause of it.

The usher introduced Madame Poiret, the unexpected sight of whom caused the accused to quiver slightly; but this trepidation passed unnoticed by the judge, whose attention was on the witness.

"What is your name?" asked the judge beginning the regular series of formalities.

Madame Poiret, a pale old woman as wrinkled as a sweetbread, dressed in a dark-blue silk gown, stated that her name was Christine-Michelle Michonneau, wife of the Sieur Poiret, aged fifty-one years, born in Paris, and now living rue de Poules, corner of the rue des Postes, where she kept furnished lodgings.

"You lived, madame," said the judge, "in 1818 and 1819 in a *pension bourgeoise*, kept by a Madame Vauquer, did you not?"

"Yes, monsieur; that is where I made the acquaintance of Monsieur Poiret, a retired government-clerk, who became my husband, and whom I have nursed in his bed, poor man, for the last year; for he 's very ill. Therefore I cannot leave my house for any length of time."

"Was there a certain Vautrin in that boarding house?" began the judge.

"Oh! monsieur, that's a long history; he was a dreadful galley-slave."

"You assisted in arresting him?"

"That is false, monsieur."

"Take care; you are before the law," said the judge, sternly.

Madame Poiret kept silence.

"Consult your memory," resumed the judge. "Can you recollect the man? Should you recognize him if you saw him?"

"I think so."

"Is that the man?" asked the judge.

Madame Poiret put on her glasses and looked at the Abbé Carlos Herrera.

"That's his build, his figure, but — no — yes — Monsieur," she said, "if I could see his breast bare, I should recognize it in a minute."

The judge and his clerk could not help laughing, in defiance of the solemnity of their functions. Jacques Collin shared their hilarity, but with more restraint. He had not replaced the coat taken off by Bibi-Lupin, and, at a sign from the judge, he readily opened his shirt.

"That's his hairy breast! but you've turned gray, Monsieur Vautrin," cried Madame Poiret.

"What do you answer to that?" asked the judge.

"That she is crazy," replied Jacques Collin.

"Ah heavens! if I had a doubt — for it is n't the same face — that voice would be enough, that's the voice that threatened me! Yes, and that's his look, too!"

"The agent of the detective police and this woman," said the judge, addressing Jacques Collin, "have had no opportunity to consult each other, and yet they

agree on the same resemblances. How do you explain that?"

"Justice has often committed even greater errors than that of relying on the testimony of a woman who recognizes a man by the hair of his breast, and on the mere suspicions of a detective," replied Jacques Collin. "They find in me resemblances of voice, look, and figure to a great criminal, but that is very vague. As for the reminiscence which proves relations between madame and my double, at which she seems not to blush, you have laughed at them yourself. Will you, monsieur, in the interests of truth, which I desire to establish for my own sake far more than you can wish it for justice, will you kindly ask Madame — Foi —"

"Poiret."

"Poret. Excuse me, I am Spanish — whether she remembers the other persons who lived in that — what did you call the house?"

"*Pension bourgeoise*," said Madame Poiret.

"I don't know what that is," said Jacques Collin.

"A house where people dine and breakfast by subscription," replied the former Mademoiselle Michonneau.

"You are right," cried Camusot, who nodded his head in approval of Jacques Collin, so much was he struck by the apparent good faith with which the accused offered him the means of reaching a result. Madame, try, if you please, to remember the names of the persons who lived in the *pension* at the time of Jacques Collin's arrest."

"There was a Monsieur de Rastignac, and Horace Bianchon, and Père Goriot, and Mademoiselle Taillefer —"

"Very good," said the judge, never ceasing to watch Jacques Collin, whose face was impassible; "that Père Goriot —"

"He is dead," said Madame Poiret.

"Monsieur," said Jacques Collin, "I have several times met in Lucien's rooms a Monsieur de Rastignac, intimate, I think, with Madame de Nucingen; if it is he whom she means he never mistook me for the criminal with whom some one is now attempting to confound me."

"Monsieur de Rastignac and Doctor Bianchon," said the judge, "both occupy such social position that their testimony, if favorable to you, will suffice to make me release you. Coquart, write out the summons for their attendance here."

In a few moments the formalities of Madame Poiret's examination were over and Coquart read to her the written report of her testimony, which she signed; but the accused refused to add his signature, on account of his ignorance of the forms of French law.

"That's enough for to-day," said Monsieur Camusot. "You must be in want of food; I will now send you back to the Conciergerie."

"Alas! I suffer too much to eat," said Jacques Collin.

Camusot was anxious that Herrera's return should coincide with the hour when the other prisoners took their exercise in the *préau;* but he wanted an answer from the director of the Conciergerie to the order he had given him in the morning. He therefore rang the bell for his usher. When the man came he said that the portress of a house on the quai Malaquais

was waiting in the antechamber to see the judge and give him a paper of importance relating to Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré.

This incident seemed so important that Camusot dropped his immediate intention and said, hastily: —

"Let her come in, at once."

## XXII.

### A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

"PARDON me, excuse me, monsieur," said the portress, bowing to the judge and to the abbé in turn, "but we have been so upset, my husband and I, and troubled by the officers of the law, that each time they have come to the house we have forgotten to give them a letter that came by post for Monsieur Lucien; it was put away in our drawer; we had to pay ten sous for it, though it comes from Paris, — but it is very heavy. Would you pay the postage? For God knows when Monsieur Lucien may get back."

"Was this letter given to you by the postman?" asked Camusot, after attentively examining the outside of the letter.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Coquart, draw up an affidavit of this declaration. Give your name, my good woman, and your occupation."

Camusot made the portress swear to her declaration, and then he himself dictated the report.

During the progress of these formalities, he examined the post-mark, which bore the hour of receipt and distribution and also the date of the day of delivery. This letter, delivered at Lucien's home the morning after Esther's death, must have been written and posted on the day of that catastrophe.

We may now judge of the stupefaction of Monsieur Camusot on reading this letter, written and signed by a woman who was supposed to be the victim of a crime.

Monday, May 13, 1830.
My last day, — 10 o'clock in the morning.

My Lucien, — I have not an hour to live. At eleven o'clock I shall be dead, and I shall die without pain. I have paid fifty thousand francs for a pretty little black currant containing a poison which kills like lightning. And so, my treasure, you can say to yourself: "My little Esther did not suffer." Yes, I shall only have suffered in writing to you these lines.

The monster who bought me so dearly, knowing that the day on which I should know myself to be his would have no morrow, has left me. For the first and last time I have been able to contrast my former life with the life of love, to compare the tenderness which expands into infinity with the horror of a debt which made me long for annihilation, so that no spot of me might be left for kisses. Perhaps this disgust was needful to make me find death sweet. I have taken a bath; I wish the confessor of the convent where I was baptized were here to confess me, and wash my soul, — but no, enough of prostitution; it would profane the sacrament and besides, I think I am washed in the water of sincere repentance. God will do with me as he will.

But let us be done with tears; I want to be your Esther to you up to my last moment, and not fret you about my death, or the future, or the good God, who could n't be *good* if he tortured me in another world when I have suffered such bitter sorrow in this.

I have your dear portrait painted by Madame Mirbel before me. That ivory leaf consoles me for your absence; I look at it with delirium as I write you my last thoughts, as

I make you feel the last beatings of my heart. I shall put the portrait under cover of this letter; for I will not leave it to be stolen or sold. The mere thought that what has been my joy could be shown in the window of a shop with the ladies and officers of the Empire and Chinese images gives me a cold shudder. My Lucien, destroy it, give it to no other woman — unless it could win you back the heart of that lath in petticoats, that Clotilde, who will give you nightmares with her sharp bones — Yes, I consent that she should have it, and then I'll still be doing you some good, as in my lifetime. Ah! to give you pleasure — or were it only to make you laugh — I'd have stood before a fire with an apple in my mouth to bake it for you! My death will be useful to you, too. Living I should have troubled your home. Ah! that Clotilde, I can't understand her! Able to be your wife, to bear your name, never to leave you night or day, to be your own, and yet make difficulties! One must be high-bred and faubourg Saint-Germain for that! and not have an ounce of flesh on her bones.

Poor Lucien! dear, balked ambitious one, I think of your future. Ah, me! you 'll regret, more than once, your poor faithful little dog, that good girl who stole for you, who would have let them drag her into a police-court could that have made you happy; whose sole occupation was to think of your pleasures and plan them for you; who had love for you in her hair, her feet, her ears; your little *ballerina*, whose looks meant blessings; who for six years thought only of you; who was so utterly yours that I have been but the emanation of my Lucien's soul as light is that of the sun. But alas, for want of money and virtue I could not be your wife. I have always thought of your future in giving you all that I possessed: I do now. Come, as soon as you receive this letter, and take what is placed for you under my pillow; for I distrust the servants of the house.

Ah! I want you to see me beautiful in death; I will lie down, stretched on my bed; I will pose for you, ah! Then

I shall press the little currant against the roof of my mouth, and there 'll be no disfigurement, no convulsions, no ridiculous posture.

I know that Madame de Sérizy has quarrelled with you on my account; but don't you see, my sweet, that when she knows I 'm dead she 'll forgive you; you must cultivate her, and she 'll marry you well if those Grandlieus persist in their refusal.

My *nini*, I don't want you to give great sighs, alas! and alas! when you hear of my death. In the first place, I ought to tell you that this hour of eleven o'clock Monday morning, May 13, is but the ending ot a long malady which began that day on the terrace at Saint-Germain, when you flung me back into my old career. There are maladies of the soul as there are of the body. Only, the soul cannot go on suffering stupidly like the body; the body never sustains the soul as the soul the body, — no, the soul has a means of cure in the thought that makes a grisette have recourse to charcoal. Dear, you gave me all of life last night when you told me that if the Grandlieus still refused you, you would marry me. 'T would have been for both a great misfortune; I should have died far more — if one can say so. I mean there are deaths that are more — or less — bitter. Never, never would the world have accepted us.

It is now some months that I have reflected deeply on many things. See! a poor girl is in the mud as I was before I went into the convent; men think her beautiful, they make her serve their pleasures, excusing themselves from considering her; they fetch her in a carriage, but they send her away on foot; if they do not spit in her face it is only because her beauty saves her from that outrage, but morally they do worse. Well, let that girl inherit five or six millions, and princes will ask her hand; she is saluted respectfully wherever she passes in her carriage; she may choose her husband from the noblest blood of France and of Navarre. This world of social life, which would ever have cried "Raca!" to us, —

to us, beautiful, united, and loving, — bowed low to Madame de Staël, in spite of her ways of living, because she had a fortune. Yes, this world, that bends the knee to money and to fame, grants nothing to happiness or virtue — for I *was* virtuous, I would have done good. Oh! how many tears would I have wiped away! — as many as I have shed. Yes, I would have lived only for you and for charity.

These reflections have made death welcome to me. And so, don't lament for me, my own darling; say to yourself, often, "There were two kind girls, two lovable creatures, who both died for me, without ever blaming me, for they adored me." Raise a memorial in your heart to Coralie, and to Esther, and go your way! be happy! Do you remember the day when you showed me an old shrivelled creature, in a melon-green hood and a brown pelisse covered with black grease-spots, the mistress of a poet before the Revolution, trying to get warm in the sun, on a bench in the Tuileries, and fretting about a horrible pug, — she who once had servants and carriages and houses? And I said to you — don't you remember? — "Better die at thirty." Well, that day, afterwards, you found me thoughtful, and you talked follies to cheer me up, but, between two kisses, I said again, "Pretty women leave the play before it ends." And so I don't want to see the last act, that's all.

"How she runs on!" you'll say; but this is my last *chatter.* I write as I used to talk to you, as I want to talk still, gayly, for you liked it. Grisettes who bemoan themselves were always a horror to me. You know I did die *well* once before, — that night of the masked ball when they let you know I had been a prostitute.

Oh! no, no, my *nini*, don't give away this portrait; if you knew with what floods of love I have plunged into those eyes — for I stopped writing to look at them with rapture — you'd think, as you gather up the love I have left upon the ivory, that the soul of your little Esther is there. No, Lucien, do not part with it.

A dead woman asking alms! — how comical! Come, come! let us be peaceful in our grave.

My death would seem heroic to fools if they knew that to-day Nucingen offered me millions if I would love him as I love you. Ah! he 'll be finely robbed when he finds I have kept my word and have died of him. I did my best to still breathe the air that you breathe. I said to that robber of women and orphans, "Do you wish me to love you as you say? I will even promise never to speak to Lucien again." "What shall I do?" he asked. "Give me two millions for him." No! if you could only have seen his face! Ah! I could have laughed, if it had n't been so tragic for me. "Save yourself the trouble of a refusal," I said. "I see now that two millions are more to you than I am; it is good for a woman to know what she is worth;" and I turned my back upon him. He 'll know in a few hours that I was not joking.

Who will part your hair for you as I did? Bah! I don't want to think of anything more in life. I have but five minutes left and I go to God. I want to speak to him of you, and ask for your happiness at the price of my death and my punishment in the other world, — it troubles me that I must go to hell. I would like to be among the angels, where I could think of you.

Adieu, my *nini*, adieu! I bless you for all my misery. To the grave, I am

Your Esther.

Eleven o'clock is striking; I have said my last prayer, and I am going now to lie down. Once more, adieu! I would that the warmth of my hand could leave my soul upon this paper where I place my last kiss. Once more I want to call you my little *minet*, though you have caused the death of your

Esther.

A spasm of jealousy was in the heart of the judge as he ended the reading of the only letter written by a suicide in which he had found such gayety, albeit a feverish gayety and the last effort of a blinded love.

"What is there in him to be loved thus?" he thought, repeating what is said by all men who have not the gift of pleasing women.

"If you are able to prove not only that you are not Jacques Collin, an escaped convict, but that you are really Don Carlos Herrera, canon of Toledo, and envoy of his Majesty Ferdinand VII.," said the judge to Jacques Collin, "you will be set at liberty at once; for the impartiality which my office demands obliges me to tell you that I have this moment received a letter from Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck, in which she avows her intention of committing suicide, and expresses such suspicion of her servants as would seem to show that they are guilty of the robbery of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs which were under her pillow."

While speaking, Monsieur Camusot was comparing the writing of the letter with that of the will, and to his mind it was evident that the letter had been written by the same person who wrote the will.

"Monsieur, you have been too hasty in suspecting a murder; may you not also be mistaken in suspecting a theft."

"Ha!" said Camusot, casting the look of a judge on the prisoner.

"Do not think that I compromise myself when I say that the sum missing can probably be found," replied Jacques Collin, letting the judge see that he understood his suspicion. "This poor girl was beloved

by her servants. If I were free, I should make it my business to search for property which now belongs to the being I love best in the world, — to Lucien. Will you have the kindness to let me read the letter? It will not take long; it is a precious proof of the innocence of my dear child; therefore you cannot fear that I should injure it — or speak of it, for I am in solitary confinement."

"Solitary confinement!" cried the judge; "of course you will not remain there. I beg you to establish your identity at once. Have recourse to your ambassador, if you like."

He held out the letter to Jacques Collin. Camusot was delighted to get rid of his perplexities, — to satisfy the attorney-general, and Mesdames de Maufrigneuse and Sérizy. Nevertheless, he examined coldly and critically the face of his prisoner while the latter read Esther's letter, and, in spite of the sincerity of the feelings that were now depicted on it, he said to himself: —

"That certainly *is* the physiognomy of a convict."

"This is love!" said Jacques Collin, returning the letter and letting Camusot see his face, which was bathed in tears.

"If you knew him!" he said. "A soul so young, so fresh, a beauty so magnificent, a child, a poet! One feels an irresistible need of sacrificing one's self to him, of satisfying even his slightest wishes. This dear Lucien is so winning when he chooses to be caressing that —"

"Well," said the magistrate, making one more effort to get at the truth," you can hardly be Jacques Collin."

"No, monsieur, I am not."

And Jacques Collin made himself more than ever Don Carlos Herrera. In his desire to finish his work, he approached the judge, drew him aside to the recess of the window, and took the manners of a prince of the Church making a confidence.

"I love that boy so much, monsieur, that if I had to remain the criminal for whom you take me in order to avoid disaster to that idol of my heart, I would accuse myself," he said, in a low voice. "I would imitate that poor girl who killed herself for his benefit. Monsieur, I entreat you to grant me a favor, — set Lucien at liberty at once."

"My duty is against it," said Camusot, kindly; "but it is with justice as with heaven, a way might be found — can you give me any good reason? Speak frankly; your words will not be taken down."

"Well, then," replied Jacques Collin, deceived by the judge's apparent kindliness, "I know what that poor boy must suffer at this moment; he is capable of trying to kill himself at the mere thought that he is in prison — "

"Oh, as for that!" said the judge, shrugging his shoulders.

"And you know not whom you oblige in doing me this service," added Jacques Collin, who wanted to touch other cords. "You render a service to an Order more powerful than the Comtesse de Sérizy, or the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who will not forgive the fact that their letters have been in your office," — and he pointed to two perfumed packages. "My Order has a memory."

"Monsieur," said Camusot, "enough! Find other reasons. I have a duty toward accused persons, as I have toward the prosecution of crime."

"Then believe me, I know Lucien. His is the soul of a woman, — a poet, Southern born, without steadfastness, without will," said Jacques Collin, thinking that the judge was wholly won. "You are now certain of the innocence of this young man; do not harass him by questions. Give him this letter; tell him he is Esther's heir, and set him at liberty. If you do otherwise you will regret it; whereas, if you will release him, I will myself explain to you (and keep me if you will in solitary confinement) to-morrow, to-night, all that seems mysterious in this affair, and the reasons of the rancorous persecution of which I am the object. In doing this I shall risk my life, which they have sought to take for five years past; but Lucien free, rich, and married to Clotilde de Grandlieu, my task in this world is accomplished. I do not care to save my skin; my persecutor is a spy of your late king."

"Ah! Corentin!"

"Is that his name? thank you. Well, monsieur, will you promise to do what I have asked of you?"

"A judge neither can nor ought to promise anything. Coquart, tell the usher and the gendarmes to take the accused back to the Conciergerie. I will give orders this evening to place you in the Pistole," he added, kindly, making a slight inclination of his head to the prisoner.

Struck by the request made by Jacques Collin, remembering the urgency with which he had asked to be examined first, — giving his illness as a reason, — all

the judge's distrust came back to him. As he again listened to his vague suspicions, he saw the pretended sick man leaving the room, and walking like a Hercules, with none of the mimicry of illness with which he entered it.

"Monsieur!" he called out.

Jacques Collin turned round.

"In spite of your refusal to sign the record of your examination, my clerk will read to you."

The prisoner was plainly in perfect health; the motion with which he went to the clerk's table and sat down by him was a last flash of light to the judge.

"You have been quickly cured," he said.

"Caught!" thought Jacques Collin; then he said aloud, "Joy, monsieur, is the only panacea that exists. That letter, the proof of an innocence I never doubted — ah, that is indeed a remedy!"

The judge watched the accused with pensive eyes as the usher and the gendarmes surrounded him; then he made the motion of a man who wakes up, and, throwing Esther's letter upon his clerk's desk, he said: —

"Coquart, copy that!"

If it is in the nature of every man to distrust the thing he is entreated to do when that thing is against his interests and against his duty, and even when it is wholly indifferent to him, this feeling is pre-eminently the law of an examining judge. The more the accused, whose own status was not yet clear, let the judge see clouds on the horizon in case Lucien was examined, the more that examination seemed necessary to Camusot. Even though this formality was not indispensable according to the Code and legal custom, it seemed re-

quired by the question of the abbé's identity. In all employments there is the conscience of our work. In default of curiosity, Camusot would have questioned Lucien, as he had questioned Jacques Collin, displaying a craftiness which an honorable judge thinks right. But now the duty to be done, even his own advancement, all became secondary, in Camusot's mind, to the desire to know the truth, to obtain it, if only to be silent about it.

He stood drumming on the window panes, completely abandoned to the flood of his conjectures; for thought is like a river that flows through many lands. Lovers of truth, magistrates, have much in common with jealous women; they give themselves up to countless suppositions; they dig into them with the dagger of suspicion, as the sacrificing high-priest disembowels the victims of the altar; moreover, they stop, not at truth, but at probability, and they end by a perception of the truth. A woman questions a man she loves very much as a judge interrogates a criminal. With such intentions, a flash of the eye, a word, an intonation of the voice, a hesitation, suffices to indicate the fact, the betrayal, the hidden crime.

"The manner in which he described his devotion to his son (if it is his son) makes me believe that he went to the house of that girl to secure the money; and, not knowing of the will that was under her pillow, he probably took, for his son, the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, provisionally. That must be the reason why he says he can and will recover that money. Monsieur de Rubempré owes it to himself, as well as to justice, to clear up the civil status of his father.

And to promise me the protection of his Order — his Order! — if I would refrain from examining the young man."

He dwelt on that thought.

As we have already seen, an examining judge carries on the examination as he pleases. He is free to use craft, or to lay it aside. The inquiry may be nothing, or it may be all. In that lies favor.

Camusot rang the bell. His usher had returned; he ordered him to fetch Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré, and to be careful that the accused did not communicate with any one, no matter who, on the way. It was now two o'clock in the afternoon.

"There is some secret there," said the judge to himself, "and it must be a secret of importance. The reasoning of that amphibious being, who is neither priest, nor layman, nor convict, nor Spaniard, and who wants to prevent some dreadful thing from coming out of his protégé's mouth is this: 'The poet is weak; he is effeminate; he is not like me, who am a Hercules in diplomacy; if you examine him you can snatch our secret from him easily.' Well, now we will get the truth out of innocence."

And he sat there tapping the edge of his table with an ivory paper-knife, while his clerk went on copying Esther's letter. How many capricious things occur in the exercise of our faculties! Camusot had supposed all possible crimes, but he passed unnoticed the only one which Jacques Collin had really committed, — namely, the forged will in favor of Lucien. Let those whose envy fastens on the position of these magistrates reflect upon their lives passed in perpetual suspicion,

in craft forced upon their minds, — for civil affairs are not less tortuous than criminal inquiries, — and they will perhaps come to the conclusion that the priest and the magistrate bear an equally heavy harness, bristling with spikes within it. All professions have their hair-shirts and their thumbscrews.

## XXIII.

### THE JUDGE APPLIES THE TORTURE.

A FEW minutes after two o'clock Monsieur Camusot saw Lucien de Rubempré brought to his office — pale, limp, undone, his eyes red and swollen, in a state of prostration, which enabled him to compare nature with art, — the really fainting man with the fainting actor. The passage from the Conciergerie to the judge's room, made between two gendarmes preceded by an usher, had brought despair to its acme in Lucien. It is in the nature of a poet to prefer death to punishment. Beholding this nature utterly devoid of mental courage, — a courage so powerfully manifested in the other prisoner, — Monsieur Camusot felt scorn for his easy victory, and a contempt which enabled him to deliver decisive blows, while it left his mind in that terrible freedom which characterizes the famous shot at a pigeon-match.

"Recover yourself, Monsieur de Rubempré; you are in presence of a magistrate eager to repair the wrong involuntarily done by arresting you on a suspicion which has proved unfounded. I believe you innocent, and you are about to be set at liberty. Here is the proof of your innocence, — a letter held by your portress in consequence of your absence, which she has now brought to me. In the trouble caused by the news of your arrest at Fontainebleau, and the visits of the

police at your house, she forgot the letter, which is from the Demoiselle Esther Gobseck. Read it."

Lucien took the letter, read it, and burst into tears. He sobbed, without being able to articulate a word. At the end of some fifteen minutes, during which time Lucien had great difficulty in maintaining any strength at all, the clerk presented to him a copy of the letter, and requested him to sign it as "a certified copy of the original, to be delivered up on demand so long as the examinations in the case should continue," — offering to read it over and collate it with the original for him; but Lucien was, naturally enough, content to trust Coquart's exactness.

"Monsieur," said the judge, in a very kindly manner, "it is, nevertheless, difficult to set you at liberty without fulfilling certain formalities, and putting a few questions to you. It is almost as a witness that I shall now require you to answer. To a man like you, I think it useless to remark that the oath to tell the truth is not only an appeal to your conscience, but it is also a necessity of your position, which has been for a short time ambiguous. The truth, no matter what it is, cannot injure you; but falsehood would send you to the court of assizes, and will oblige me now to send you back to the Conciergerie, whereas, if you answer frankly, you will sleep at home to-night, and you shall be publicly vindicated in the public journals by the following notice: 'Monsieur de Rubempré, arrested yesterday at Fontainebleau, was immediately released after a very short examination.'"

This speech produced a lively impression on Lucien. Seeing this, the judge continued: —

"I repeat, you have been suspected of complicity in the murder, by poison, of the Demoiselle Esther. There is, however, proof of her suicide, and that ends the question of murder. But a sum of money has been taken from the house, — seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, — which now forms part of your inheri tance. Here, unfortunately, there is a crime. The crime precedes the discovery of the will. Now the law has reason to think that a person who loves you as much as the Demoiselle Esther loved you has been guilty of this crime, for your sake. No, do not interrupt me," said the judge, imposing silence on Lucien, who wished to speak, by a motion of his hand. "I am not questioning you yet. I wish to make you understand how much your honor is concerned in this matter. Abandon the false, the miserable point of honor which binds accomplices together, and tell the whole truth."

Our readers must already have observed the extreme disproportion of weapons existing between accused persons and examining judges. It is true that denial, cleverly managed, has on its side completeness of form, and is sufficient for a criminal's defence; but, for all that, it is a sort of panoply which becomes a crushing weight when some turn in the examination discloses a rent in it. As soon as denial is insufficient against evident facts, the accused person is absolutely at the mercy of the judge. Suppose, now, that a semi-criminal, such as Lucien, saved from the first wreck of his virtue, might amend his ways, and become of use to his country; he would perish among these nets and wiles of examination. The judge draws up a brief and dry re-

port (*procès-verbal*), — a faithful record of the questions and answers; but of his insidious paternal persuasions, his captious remonstrances, like those we have given, nothing remains. The judges of the upper courts and the juries see and know nothing of the means by which these replies have been obtained. Therefore, according to some opinions, it would be better if the examination were conducted, as in England, before the jury. France did practise that system for a short time. Under the Code Brumaire, of the year VI., there was what was called a jury of inquiry [*jury d'accusation*], to distinguish it from the judge's jury [*jury du judgment*]. As to the final trial of a case, if it passed the jury of inquiry, it went to the Royal courts without the concurrence of the other jury.

"Now," said Camusot, after a pause, "what is your name? Monsieur Coquart, attention!" he said to the clerk.

"Lucien Chardon de Rubempré."

"Where born?"

"Angoulême."

And Lucien gave the day, month, and year.

"You had no property from your father?"

"None."

"You did, nevertheless, during your first residence in Paris, live at considerable expense, compared with your small means?"

"Yes, monsieur; but I had at that time a devoted friend, in Mademoiselle Coralie, whom I had the misfortune to lose. It was grief, caused by her death, which took me back to my former home."

"Good, monsieur," said Camusot; "I commend your frankness; it will be appreciated."

Lucien was entering, as we see, upon the path of general confession.

"You incurred far greater expenses after your return from Angoulême to Paris," resumed Camusot. "You have lived like a man who spends from fifty to sixty thousand francs a year."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Who supplied you with that money?"

"My protector, the Abbé Carlos Herrera."

"Where did you first know him?"

"I met him on the high-road, at a moment when I was about to rid myself of life by suicide."

"You had never heard your family mention him, or your mother?"

"Never."

"Can you remember the month and year when you first became connected with Mademoiselle Esther?"

"Toward the end of 1823, at a little theatre on the boulevard."

"At first she cost you money?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Lately, in the hope of marrying Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, you bought the remains of the château de Rubempré, to which you have added lands worth about a million. You told the Grandlieu family that your sister and brother-in-law had lately inherited a large fortune and that you owed the sum for the payment of your purchase to their liberality. Did you say that, monsieur, to the Grandlieu family?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You are ignorant of the reasons why your marriage was broken off?"

"Entirely."

"Well, the Grandlieu family sent one of the most trusty lawyers in Paris to your brother-in-law, in order to obtain information. This lawyer learned at Angoulême, from the statements of your sister and your brother-in-law, not only that they had lent you nothing, but that their inheritance was chiefly in land, and that the personal property amounted to little more than two hundred thousand francs. You cannot think it strange that a family like that of Grandlieu should draw back when they find your fortune such that you dare not explain its origin. You see, monsieur, the position in which a lie has placed you."

Lucien was struck dumb by this revelation; and the little strength of mind he still retained abandoned him.

"The police and the legal authorities know all they wish to know, remember that," said Camusot. "Now," he resumed, after a pause, thinking of the abbé's claim to be Lucien's father, "do you know who this so-called Carlos Herrera is?"

"Yes, monsieur; but I knew it too late."

"Too late? how do you mean? Explain yourself."

"He is not a priest, he is not a Spaniard, he is —

"An escaped convict?" said the judge, quickly.

"Yes," replied Lucien. "But when the fatal secret was revealed to me I was already under obligations to him. I thought I had allied myself with a respectable ecclesiastic —"

"Jacques Collin —" said the judge, beginning a sentence.

"Jacques Collin," said Lucien, interrupting him, "yes, that is his name."

"Good. Jacques Collin," resumed Camusot, "has just been recognized here by two persons; but he still denies his identity — in your interests, I think. I asked you if you knew who he was for another purpose, to expose what may prove to be another imposture of Jacques Collin."

Instantly Lucien felt as if hot irons were plunged into him.

"Are you ignorant," continued the judge, "that he pretends to be your father, to explain the extraordinary relation in which you stand to him?"

"He! my father! Oh, monsieur, did he say that?"

"Have you suspected where the sums of money which he gave you came from? It is to be believed from the letter which you hold in your hand that Mademoiselle Esther, that poor girl, did, later, render you the same services as Mademoiselle Coralie; but you were, as you have just said, living in Paris and living luxuriously for some years before you received anything from her. Can you tell me where the money came from?"

"Ah! monsieur, it is you who must tell me," cried Lucien, "where convicts get their money — Jacques Collin my father! Oh! my poor mother!"

And he burst into tears.

"Clerk, read that part of the examination in which the pretended Carlos Herrera declares himself the father of Lucien de Rubempré."

The poet listened to the reading in silence and with a countenance it was painful to witness.

"I am lost!" he cried.

"No man is lost in the path of truth and honor," said the judge.

"But you will send Jacques Collin to the assizes," said Lucien.

"Undoubtedly," replied Camusot, who wished to make Lucien say more. "Continue; say what you think."

But, in spite of the efforts and remonstrances of the judge, Lucien no longer answered. Reflection had come, — too late, as it does in all men who are slaves to feeling. There lies the difference between the poet and the man of action: one delivers himself over to feeling to reproduce his living images, he judges nothing until later; whereas the other judges and feels together. Lucien sat pale and dumb; he saw himself at the bottom of the precipice down which the judge had rolled him, while he, the poet, had let himself be trapped by apparent kindness. He had betrayed, not his benefactor but his accomplice, — him, who had defended their position with the courage of a lion and an ability without a flaw. Just there, where Jacques Collin had saved Lucien by his audacity, Lucien, the man of mind, had lost all by his want of intelligence and his lack of reflection. The infamous lie, which had so shocked him, was the screen of a truth, for him more infamous. Confounded by the subtlety of the judge, terrified by his cruel cleverness, by the rapidity of the blows given, by the exposure of the faults of all his life thus brought to light like so many grapnels to drag his conscience, Lucien was like an animal which the club of the slaughter-house has missed. Free and innocent in the eye of the law when he entered that room, in one hour

he saw himself a criminal by his own confession. The final, horrible mockery came when the judge, cold and calm, let him see that the revelation he had made was the result of a blunder. Camusot was thinking of Jacques Collin's claim as a father, while Lucien, impelled by the fear of seeing his connection with a convict made public, had imitated the celebrated inadvertence of the murderers of Ibycus.

One of the claims to glory of Royer-Collard is that he maintained the constant triumph of natural sentiments over imposed sentiments; and he maintained, also, the inviolability of pledges, declaring that the law of hospitality was binding even to the point of annulling the value of a judicial oath. He confessed this theory in the face of all the world from the French chambers; he bravely defended conspirators, and showed that it was human to obey the demands of friendship rather than the tyrannical laws drawn from social arsenals for such or such cases. In short, Natural Right has laws which have never yet been promulgated; which are more efficacious and better known than those forged by society. Lucien had just betrayed — to his own detriment, as it proved — the law of solidarity, which obliged him to be silent, and let Jacques Collin defend himself; but, worse than that, he had accused him! For his own sake, in his own interests, the man should have been, then and always, Carlos Herrera.

Monsieur Camusot enjoyed his triumph. He held two guilty men; with the hand of the law he had struck down an idol of fashionable society, and he had found the hitherto unfindable Jacques Collin. He

would, undoubtedly, be considered one of the ablest of examining judges. So he let the unhappy prisoner keep silence; but he studied that silence of consternation; he saw the drops of sweat accumulating on that anguished face, swelling and rolling down to mingle with two streams of tears.

"Why weep, Monsieur de Rubempré," he said at last. "You are, as I have told you, the heir of Mademoiselle Esther, who had no direct or collateral heirs; and her estate amounts to nearly eight millions, if the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs are found."

This was a last blow to the wretched man. Had he borne himself firmly for ten minutes, as Jacques Collin had said in his note, Lucien would have attained to the height of his desires. He could have paid his debt to Jacques Collin, and parted from him; he was rich, and could have married Clotilde. Nothing shows more eloquently than this scene the power given to examining judges by the isolation in which accused persons are kept previous to and during the period of their examinations, and the value of such a communication as Asia had been able to convey to Jacques Collin.

"Ah, monsieur!" replied Lucien, with the bitterness and irony of a man who makes a pedestal of his accomplished misfortune, "how justly you say in your legal language, 'undergo an examination.' Between the physical torture of former times and the mental torture of to-day I would not, for my part, hesitate. I prefer the sufferings inflicted by an executioner. What more do you want of me?" he added, proudly.

"In this place," replied the magistrate, becoming

haughty and disdainful in reply to the poet's pride, "I alone have the right to ask questions."

"But I had the right not to answer," murmured poor Lucien, whose intelligence had now come fully back to him.

"Clerk, read his examination to the accused."

"Again 'accused'!" said Lucien to himself.

While the clerk read the document, Lucien came to a resolution which obliged him to fawn upon Monsieur Camusot. When the murmur of Coquart's voice ceased, the poet quivered like a man who has slept through a noise to which his senses were accustomed, and who is waked by its cessation.

"You must sign that report of your examination," said the judge.

"And then will you set me at liberty?" asked Lucien, with some irony.

"Not yet," replied Camusot; "but to-morrow, after you have been confronted with Jacques Collin, you will no doubt be free. Justice must first know whether you are or are not an accomplice in the crimes committed by that individual since his escape in 1820. However, you will no longer be kept in solitary confinement. I will write to the director to put you in one of the best rooms in the Pistole."

"Can I have writing materials?"

"They will give you whatever you ask for; I will send the order by the usher who takes you back."

Lucien signed the report mechanically, and he marked certain passages in obedience to Coquart's directions with the meekness of a resigned victim. A single detail will do more to show the condition in which he now

was than any lengthened description. The announcement that he would be confronted with Jacques Collin had dried the drops of sweat upon his face; his dry eyes shone with intolerable brilliancy. In short, he became, in a moment that was rapid as lightning, what Jacques Collin was, a man of iron.

In natures like that of Lucien, which Jacques Collin had so truly analyzed, these sudden passings from a state of complete demoralization to an almost metallic condition (so tremendous is the tension of human force) are among the most striking phenomena in the life of ideas. Will returns, like water to a dried-up spring; it infuses itself into the apparatus prepared for the action of its mysterious constitutive substance,—then the dead body becomes a man, and the man springs forth armed with full strength for mighty struggles.

Lucien put Esther's letter and the miniature it enclosed upon his heart. Then he bowed haughtily to Monsieur Camusot, and walked with a firm step through the corridors between two gendarmes.

"That is an utter scoundrel!" said the judge to his clerk, as the door closed on Lucien. "He thought to save himself by sacrificing his accomplice."

"Of the two," replied Coquart, timidly, "the convict is the better man."

"I give you your liberty for to-day, Coquart," said the judge. "We have done enough of this. Send away the people who are waiting; tell them to come back to-morrow. Stay! go first to the attorney-general, and see if he is still in his office. If he is, ask him to give me five minutes' audience. Oh, he is certainly there!" added the judge, looking at a shabby clock of green-

painted wood with gilt lines; "it is only a quarter to four."

These examinations, which are read so rapidly, take an immense amount of time, for the questions and answers are all written down at full length. This is one of the causes of the great delays in criminal cases, and of the length of an accused person's confinement. To persons in any small business it is often ruin; to the rich and prosperous, shame; for to them a prompt release repairs, as far it can be repaired, the misfortune of an arrest. This is why the two scenes just enacted in the judge's office had taken all the time consumed by Asia in deciphering her master's missives, in bringing a duchess from her boudoir, and inspiring energy and a course of action to Madame de Sérizy.

## XXIV.

### WHAT WOMEN CAN DO IN PARIS.

Camusot, now alone and considering how his cleverness could be made to conduce to his own advancement, took up the reports of the two examinations, reread them, and resolved to show them to the attorney-general, ostensibly to ask his advice. While he was meditating thus, his usher entered to say the footman of Madame de Sérizy wished to speak to him very particularly. On a sign from Camusot, a man-servant, dressed like a master, presented himself, looked alternately at the judge and the usher, and said: "Is it Monsieur Camusot to whom I have the honor —"

"Yes," replied the judge and the usher together.

Camusot took a note which the servant presented to him, and read as follows: —

In behalf of several interests, which you will readily comprehend, dear Monsieur Camusot, do not examine Monsieur de Rubempré; we will bring you proofs of his innocence, so that he may be at once set at liberty.

D. de Maufrigneuse.
L. de Sérizy.

Burn this note before the bearer.

Camusot perceived too late that he had made an immense mistake in setting traps for Lucien. He began to obey the two great ladies by lighting a candle

and burning the letter, which was written by the duchess. The valet bowed respectfully.

"Is Madame de Sérizy coming here?" asked the judge.

"Yes, monsieur, immediately," replied the man.

Coquart here returned and informed his master that the attorney-general was awaiting him.

Under pressure of the blunder he had committed, against his ambition but to the profit of justice, the judge, in whom seven years' practice had developed a shrewdness of which no man who has measured swords with grisettes during his legal studies is devoid, remembered certain weapons which might yet protect him from the resentment of the two ladies. The candle at which he had burned their note was still lighted; he used it to seal up thirty letters from Madame de Maufrigneuse to Lucien and the still more voluminous correspondence of Madame de Sérizy. Taking these packets and the reports of the examinations with him, he went to his meeting with the attorney-general.

The Palais de Justice is a mass of confused structures heaped one upon another, — some parts grand, some mean; each injuring the others by want of harmony. The Salle des Pas-Perdus is the largest of all known halls; but its bareness is a horror and discouragement to the eye. This vast cathedral of chicanery crushes the Royal Court. In the Galerie Marchande is a stairway with two balusters, beneath which opens a large double door. The stairway leads to the court of assizes; the door to a second court of the same kind; for in some years the crimes committed in the

department of the Seine require the session of two courts. Here too is the office of the attorney-general, the barristers' room, their library, the offices of the solicitor-general, and the assistants of the attorney-general. All these premises, for we must use a generic term, are connected by dark passages, and corkscrew staircases which are the disgrace of architecture, of Paris, and of France. A painter of manners and customs actually shrinks from describing the miserable passage three feet wide where the witnesses to the upper court of assizes are made to wait. As for the stove which heats the court-room it would disgrace a café on the Boulevard Montparnasse. The office of the attorney-general is in an octagon wing which flanks the Galerie Marchande. This part of the Palais de Justice is overshadowed by the lofty and magnificent elevations of the Sainte-Chapelle. All is silent and gloomy.

Monsieur de Granville, a worthy successor to the great magistrates of the old parliament, had not felt willing to leave the Palais until he knew how Lucien's affair had ended. He expected news from Camusot, and the judge's message had thrown him into that involuntary revery which a period of waiting gives to the firmest minds. He was seated in the recess of a window; but he now rose, and walked up and down; for he had found Camusot that morning, when he met him intentionally, very dull of comprehension, and he felt vaguely uneasy; for, in addition to his own good-will to Lucien, there was another reason why he should wish to see him cleared. The interests of his best friend and one of his warmest protectors, the Comte de Sérizy, a

minister of State, a member of the Privy Council, and the future chancellor of France, were concerned in the affair. The world knew that Lucien de Rubempré was an intimate at the count's house, and the attorney-general foresaw the scandal that would be made, both in public, in society, and at court, if the guilt of a man whose name had already been ill-naturedly coupled with that of the countess was proved. The dignity of his own function, however, forbade his attempting to interfere with the absolute independence of the examining judge.

"Ah!" he said to himself, crossing his arms, "formerly power had the right to assume jurisdiction where necessary. Our mania for equality" (he dared not say "legality," as a poet lately declared with great courage in the Chamber) "will be the ruin of our present era."

At the moment when the attorney-general, pursuing his train of thought, had just said to himself: "Camusot will be sure to commit some stupidity," the examining judge himself tapped at the door of the office.

"Well! my dear Camusot, how has that affair gone about which we were speaking this morning?"

"Badly for the accused, monsieur le comte; read the reports and judge for yourself."

He offered the reports to the attorney-general, who took out his eyeglasses and retired to the window; the reading was soon over.

"You have done your duty," said the attorney-general, in a curt tone. "Those reports settle the matter; justice must take its course. You have shown such ability that your services as an examining judge can never be dispensed with."

If Monsieur de Granville had said to Camusot: "You will be all your life an examining judge and nothing more," he could not have been more explicit than he was in that compliment. Camusot turned cold to the marrow of his bones.

"Madame la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, to whom I owe —"

"Ah! the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse!" said Granville, interrupting the judge. "True, you have not yielded, I see, to any influence. You have done well, monsieur. You will be a great magistrate."

At this moment Comte Octave de Bauvan opened the door without knocking, and said to the Comte de Granville: —

"My dear count, I bring you a pretty woman, who does n't know where to turn, and has lost her way in our labyrinth."

And he came in, leading by the hand the Comtesse de Sérizy.

"You here, madame!" exclaimed the attorney-general, offering her his own arm-chair, — "and at this moment! Here is Monsieur Camusot, madame," he said, motioning to the judge. "Bauvan," he added, addressing that illustrious orator of the Restoration, "wait for me in the room of the chief-justice, — he is still there; and I'll join you."

The Comte de Bauvan understood not only that it was too late, but that the attorney-general had some reason for wanting an excuse to leave his office.

Madame de Sérizy had not committed the mistake of coming to the Palais in her own carriage, with its handsome hammer-cloth and armorial bearings and two foot-

men behind it in white silk stockings. On the contrary, she arrived in a hackney-coach, wearing a plain brown dress, a black shawl, and a velvet bonnet the flowers of which had been replaced by a black lace veil.

"Did you receive our letter?" she said to Camusot, whose bewildered air surprised her.

"Too late, alas! Madame la comtesse," replied the judge, who had no tact or presence of mind except in his own office and among his prisoners.

"Why too late?"

She looked at Monsieur de Granville and saw misfortune on his face.

"It must not be too late," she added in a despotic tone.

Women, pretty women, in Madame de Sérizy's position, are the spoilt children of French civilization. If women in other countries knew what a fashionable, rich, and titled woman is in Paris, they would all want to come and share such splendid royalty. Women, bound only by the laws of decorum and good-manners, by what may be called, in short, the Code Feminine, laugh at the laws that men have made. They say anything; they refrain from no caprice, no wilfulness; for they thoroughly understand that they are responsible for nothing except their feminine honor and their children. They will say, laughing, the most preposterous things and expect to make them law; like the pretty Madame de Bauvan, who, coming to the Palais to fetch her husband in the early days of their marriage, was heard to say, "Make haste and get through judging, — I want you."

"Madame," said the attorney-general, "Monsieur

Lucien de Rubempré is not guilty of robbery or murder, but Monsieur Camusot has made him confess another crime that is almost as great."

"What crime?" she demanded.

"He has admitted," said the attorney-general in her ear, "that he is the friend and pensioner of an escaped convict. The Abbé Carlos Herrera who has lived with him for the last seven years is the famous Jacques Collin —"

Madame de Sérizy felt as if she were branded with hot irons herself while the count was speaking.

"And the upshot?" she asked.

"The upshot," said Monsieur de Granville, continuing her sentence and still speaking in a low voice, "is that the convict will be brought before the court of assizes, and if Lucien does not stand by his side as guilty of having profited knowingly by the thefts of his accomplice, he must certainly appear as a witness painfully compromised."

"Never!" she cried aloud, with amazing decision. "I will never see a man whom the world knows to be my best friend declared in a court of law the comrade of a convict — The King is devoted to my husband."

"Madame," said the attorney-general, aloud, and smiling, "the King has not the slightest power over the most insignificant examining judge in his kingdom. That is the grandeur of our new institutions. I have myself just congratulated Monsieur Camusot on his ability —"

"Say rather his clumsiness," said the countess, sharply, who was less disturbed by Lucien's intimacy with an outlaw than by his relations with Esther.

"If you will read the report of the examinations to which Monsieur Camusot subjected the two accused persons, you will see that everything depends *on him.*"

After this hint, the only interference the attorney-general could allow himself, and after receiving a look of feminine subtlety, the attorney-general went toward the door of his office. There he turned, and added: "Excuse me, madame, but I have a word or two I must say to Bauvan."

This, in the language of society, signified to the countess: "I don't want to witness what passes between you and Camusot."

"What are these reports of examinations?" said the countess, very sweetly, looking at Camusot, who stood all abashed before the wife of one of the greatest personages in the State.

"Madame," replied Camusot, "a clerk takes down in writing the questions of the judge and the answers of the accused; the report is then signed by the clerk, the judge, and the accused. These reports form the basis of the case; they determine whether or not the accused person shall be sent before the court of assizes."

"Oh!" she said, "and suppose these reports were suppressed?"

"Madame, a judge would commit a crime —"

"It was a much greater crime to have written them," she said. "But, at this moment, they appear to be the only proof against Lucien. Read me those reports, that I may see what means we still have to save him; it is a matter in which my happiness and that of Monsieur de Sérizy are concerned."

"Madame," said Camusot, "do not think that I have forgotten the consideration I owe to you. Had this examination been confided to Monsieur Popinot, for instance, you would have been much less safe than you are with me. The police seized all papers in Monsieur Lucien's house, even your letters —"

"Oh! my letters."

"Here they are, sealed up," said the judge, giving her the packet.

The countess rang the bell, as if she had been in her own house. The office servant of the attorney-general entered.

"A light," she said.

The servant lighted a candle, and put it on the mantel-shelf, while the countess looked over her letters, counted them, crumpled them up, and threw them on the hearth. Then she twisted up the last, lit it at the candle, and set fire to the heap below. Camusot stood gazing rather vacantly at the flaming papers, still holding the reports in his hand. The countess, who appeared to be wholly intent on destroying the proofs of her affection, was observing the judge cautiously out of the corner of her eye. She took her time, calculated her movements, and then, with the agility of a cat, she seized the two reports and flung them into the flames. Camusot snatched them out; the countess sprang upon him, and seized the burning papers. Then followed a struggle, in which Camusot cried out, "Madame! madame! you are attempting a — Madame!"

A man rushed into the room; the countess could not restrain a cry of surprise as she recognized her hus-

band, followed by Monsieur de Granville and Monsieur de Bauvan. Nevertheless, determined to save Lucien at any cost, she did not loosen her grip upon the terrible papers, which she held with the strength of pincers, though the flames had already seared her delicate skin. At last Camusot, whose own fingers were burned, seemed ashamed of the situation, and relinquished the papers, of which little now remained but the parts covered by the grasp of the two wrestlers. This scene passed in a moment of time much less than that which it takes to read it.

"What is all this between you and Madame de Sérizy?" said the cabinet minister to Camusot.

Before the judge could answer, the countess had applied the fragments of the reports to the flame of the candle and thrown them upon the heap that was smouldering on the hearth.

"I shall be obliged," said Camusot, "to enter a complaint against Madame la comtesse."

"What has she done?" asked the attorney-general, looking alternately at the judge and the countess.

"I have burned the examinations," said the woman of the world, laughing, so delighted with her high-handed measure that she did not yet feel her burns; "and if it is a crime, — well, monsieur can do his horrible scribblings over again!"

"True," said Camusot, endeavoring to recover his dignity.

"Well, well, it is all for the best!" said the attorney-general. "But, my dear countess, you must n't often take such liberties with the magistracy, for you might not always be recognized for what you are."

"Monsieur Camusot has bravely resisted a woman whom no one resists; the honor of the robe is therefore safe!" said the Comte de Bauvan, laughing.

"Ah! Monsieur Camusot resisted, did he?" said the attorney-general, laughing; "he is very strong."

Thus a serious, if not criminal, proceeding was turned into the joke of a pretty woman, at which even Camusot himself was now laughing.

But the attorney-general caught sight of a man who did not laugh, and he took the Comte de Sérizy apart.

"My friend," he whispered in his ear, "this unfortunate affair compels me to compromise for the first and last time in my life with my official duty."

He rang the bell, and the servant came.

"Go to the office of the 'Gazette des Tribuneaux,' and tell Maître Massol to come here, if you can find him. My dear judge," he said to Camusot, taking him apart from the others, "go back to your office, and make your clerk rewrite the examination of the Abbé Carlos Herrera; this can be done without impropriety, as he did not sign the first. To-morrow you must confront this Spanish diplomatist with Messieurs de Rastignac and Bianchon, who will not recognize in him our Jacques Collin. Certain of being set at liberty, the abbé will sign the papers. Set Lucien de Rubempré at liberty at once. You may be certain that he will never speak of the examination he has undergone. The 'Gazette des Tribuneaux' will announce his release to-morrow. And now let us see whether justice and the law are injured in any way by these proceedings. If the Spaniard is the convict, we have a hundred ways, now that our eyes are on him, of retaking him.

We have already sought for diplomatic enlightenment as to his conduct in Spain. Corentin is on his traces. As for Lucien, there is no charge against him. The robbery of the seven hundred thousand francs is, in point of fact, to his injury. He had much better lose that money than lose his reputation by recovering it. That young man is a spotted orange, my dear Camusot; but we need n't make him rotten. This matter can all be settled in half an hour. Go now; we will await you here. It is only half-past four; the judges are still at the Palais. Let me know if you can get an order of release at once, or whether Lucien must wait till to-morrow."

Camusot left the room after bowing to all present. Madame de Sérizy, who by this time was suffering from her burns, did not return his bow. Monsieur de Sérizy had rushed from the room while the attorney-general was talking with the judge, and now returned with a little pot of cerate, with which he dressed his wife's burns as he whispered in her ear: —

"Léontine, why did you come here without letting me know?"

"Oh, my friend," she whispered, "forgive me! I was beside myself; but it was in your interests as well as mine."

"Be fond of that young man, since fate wills it," said her husband; "but don't take the whole world into your confidence."

"Well, my dear countess," said Monsieur de Granville, after talking for a time with Octave de Beauvan, "I hope that you will be able to carry Monsieur de Rubempré home to dinner this very evening."

This half-promise produced such a reaction in Madame de Sérizy that she wept.

"I'll try to find some ushers to bring him here, so that you may not see him escorted by gendarmes," added Monsieur de Granville.

"Oh, you are good!" she said, with an effusion of gratitude that made her voice divinely musical.

## XXV.

### HOW IT ENDED.

WHILE pretty women, cabinet ministers, and magistrates conspired to save Lucien, let us see what was happening in the Conciergerie.

As he passed through the *guichet* Lucien said to the clerk that Monsieur Camusot had permitted him to write, and he asked for pens, ink, and paper; which a turnkey received the order to take to him after a word said in the director's ear by the judge's usher.

During the time the turnkey took in obtaining and bringing up to Lucien the things he had asked for, the unfortunate young man, to whom the idea of being confronted with Jacques Collin was intolerable, fell into one of those meditations in which the idea of suicide, to which he had already yielded without accomplishment, attains to mania. According to some great alienists, suicide in certain organizations is the termination of a mental alienation. Since his arrest Lucien had fastened on that idea. Esther's letter increased his desire to die, by reminding him of Romeo rejoining Juliet. When materials were brought to him, he wrote as follows: —

THIS IS MY TESTAMENT.

I, the undersigned, give and bequeath to the children of my sister, Madame Ève Chardon, wife of David Séchard, formerly a printer at Angoulême, all the property, real or

personal, of which I die possessed, excepting such as may be required to pay my debts and the following legacies, which I request my executor to do.

I entreat Monsieur de Sérizy to accept the office of executor of this my will.

There shall be paid: (1) to Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera the sum of three hundred thousand francs; (2) to Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen fourteen hundred thousand francs, which sum is to be reduced by seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, in case the money lost from Mademoiselle Esther's apartment be recovered.

I give and bequeath, as heir of Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck, the sum of seven hundred and sixty thousand francs to the Religious Houses of Paris to found an asylum to be specially devoted to public prostitutes who may desire to quit their career of vice and perdition.

In addition, I bequeath to the said Religious Houses the sum necessary to purchase an investment in the Funds at five per cent, producing thirty thousand francs a year, — the said interest to be employed semi-annually in the release of prisoners for debt, when their indebtedness amounts to a maximum of two thousand francs.

I request Monsieur de Sérizy to devote the sum of forty thousand francs to a monument to be erected in the Eastern Cemetery over Mademoiselle Esther; and I direct that I be buried beside her. This monument is to be made like the tombs of antiquity; it shall be square, and our two forms in white marble shall lie upon the lid, the heads resting on cushions, the hands clasped and raised to heaven. This tomb is to have no inscription.

I request Monsieur de Sérizy to give to Monsieur Eugène de Rastignac the toilet-set in gold which will be found in my room, as a remembrance.

Lastly, I request my executor to accept from me the gift I make him of my library.

LUCIEN CHARDON DE RUBEMPRÉ.

This will was enclosed in a letter addressed to Monsieur le Comte de Granville, attorney-general of the Royal Court of Paris, and thus worded: —

Monsieur le Comte, — I intrust to you my will. When you open this letter I shall be no more. In the hope of recovering my liberty I replied so basely to the insidious questions of Monsieur Camusot that, in spite of my innocence, I may be involved in an infamous trial. Even supposing me to be acquitted of all blame, life would be impossible according to the susceptibilities of the world.

Forward, I beg of you, the enclosed letter to the Abbé Don Carlos Herrera, without opening it; and send to Monsieur Camusot the formal retractation of my testimony which I enclose.

I think that the authorities will not dare to break the seal of a package directed to you. Confident of this, I bid you farewell, offering you for the last time my respects, and begging you to believe that in thus writing I have meant to give you a mark of gratitude for all the many kindnesses you have shown to

Your servitor,

Lucien de R.

*To the Abbé Carlos Herrera:*

My dear Abbé, — I have received nothing but benefits from you, and I have betrayed you. This involuntary ingratitude kills me, and when you read these lines I shall no longer exist, — you are no longer here to save me.

You gave me full right, in case I found an advantage in it, to sacrifice you, and throw you away like the end of a cigar; but I have sacrificed you foolishly. To get myself out of difficulty, misled by the captious questioning of the examining judge, I, your spiritual son, whom you adopted, went over to the side of those who wish at any

cost to destroy you by discovering an identity (which I know to be impossible) between you and a French criminal. All is over.

Between a man of your power and me, of whom you have tried to make a greater person than I could be, there should be no silly sentiment at the moment of our final parting. You have wished to make me powerful and famous; you have flung me into the gulf of suicide — that is all. I have long seen its vertigo approaching me.

There is, as you once said, a posterity of Cain, and one of Abel. Cain, in the grand drama of humanity, is Opposition. You are descended from Adam by that line, into which the devil has continued to blow his flame, the first sparks of which were cast on Eve. Among the demons of this descent some appear, from time to time, of terrible vigor, of vast organization, combining all human forces, and resembling those rampant animals of the desert whose life requires the great spaces in which they are found. These men are dangerous to society, as lions would be dangerous in Normandy: they must have food; they devour common men, and suck the gold of fools; even their games are so perilous that they end by killing the poor dog of whom they make a companion, an idol. When God wills it, these mysterious beings are named Moses, Attila, Charlemagne, Robespierre, Napoleon; but when he lets a generation of these gigantic instruments rust in the depths of ocean they are nothing more than Pugatcheff, Fouché, Louvel, and Carlos Herrera. Gifted with a mighty power over tender souls, they attract and knead them. 'T is grand, 't is fine in its way; 't is the poisonous plant with glowing colors that entices children in a wood; 't is the poesy of Evil. Men like you should live in lairs and never leave them. You made me live within the circle of this stupendous life, and I have had my fill of existence. Therefore I withdraw my head from the Gordian knot of your policy to fasten it in the running noose of my cravat.

To repair my fault, I transmit to the attorney-general a formal retractation of my testimony. You will see to its being of service to you.

In pursuance of my will you will receive, Monsieur l'abbé, the sums belonging to your Order which you spent, most imprudently, on me, in consequence of the paternal affection you have always shown me.

Farewell, then, farewell, grandiose statue of Evil and corruption; farewell, you, who in the path of Good would have been greater than Ximenes, greater than Richelieu. You have kept your promises; I find myself once more on the banks of the Charente, after owing to you the enchantments of a dream; but, unfortunately, it is not the river of mine own country in which I was about to drown the peccadilloes of my youth, — it is the Seine, and my pool is a cell in the Conciergerie.

Do not regret me. My contempt for you is equal to my admiration.

LUCIEN.

DECLARATION.

I, the undersigned, do hereby retract entirely all that is contained in the report of the examination which I was made to undergo this day by Monsieur Camusot.

The Abbé Carlos Herrera was in the habit of calling himself my spiritual father; and I mistook the word when used by the judge in another sense, no doubt erroneously.

I know that, for political reasons and to destroy the existence of certain secrets which concern the cabinets of Spain and the Tuileries, obscure diplomatic agents are endeavoring to show that the Abbé Carlos Herrera is an escaped convict named Jacques Collin; but the said Abbé Carlos Herrera never made me any other confidence on this subject beyond that of his efforts to prove either the decease or the existence of the said Jacques Collin.

At the Conciergerie, May 15, 1830.

LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ.

The fever of suicide gave to Lucien the same lucidity of ideas and activity of hand which are known to authors in the heat and fever of composition. So great was this impulse in him that these four papers were written in the space of half an hour. He made them into a package, fastened the package with wafers and stamped them, with the force of delirium, with a seal bearing his coat-of-arms that he wore on his finger. Then he placed the package conspicuously on the floor in the middle of the room.

Certainly it would have been difficult to act with more dignity in the false position to which infamy had brought Lucien. He saved his own memory, and he repaired the wrong done to his accomplice, so far as the mind of the man of the world could annul the effects of his actions.

If Lucien had been placed in one of the secret-confinement cells, he would have found it impossible to carry out his design; for those boxes of smooth stone have no furniture but a species of camp-bedstead and a bucket. There is not a nail, not a chair, not even a stool. The camp bedstead is so securely fastened that it is impossible to remove it from its place without a labor that would soon be noticed by the turnkey through the iron grating, which is always open. In the rooms of the Pistole, and especially in that where Lucien had been placed by the judge's orders out of regard for a young man belonging to the highest class of Parisian society, the movable bedstead, a table, and a chair could all serve the purpose of suicide, without, however, making it easy. Lucien wore a long black silk cravat, and, on his way back from examination he rec-

ollected the manner in which Pichegru, more or less voluntarily, killed himself. Death by hanging requires a strong support and sufficient space between the body and the ground to prevent the feet from touching anything. Now the window of his cell looking on the *préau* had no fastening, and the iron bars that protected it on the outside were the whole width of a thick wall away from the room, and gave him therefore no point of support.

The plan that his faculty of invention suggested rapidly to Lucien's mind was as follows: The high and deep recess of the window, which resembled a funnel, prevented Lucien from looking out into the *préau*, but it also prevented the turnkey from seeing what took place about it. Now, though the lower window-panes had been replaced by wooden planks, the glass remained in the upper portion of the sash, divided into small panes with a heavy frame and cross-bars. By mounting on the table, Lucien could reach the glazed portion of the window, and, by removing or breaking two panes, he could use the strong cross-bar between them as his point of support. He resolved to do this: to pass his cravat around the bar, making a turn about his own neck and fastening the end securely, and then to knock away the table from under him with his feet.

He moved the table to the window noiselessly, took off his coat and waistcoat, and mounted the table without the least hesitation, to remove the panes above and below the first cross-bar. When he was thus raised he could look into the *préau*, and there he beheld a magic spectacle, seen by him for the first time; for the director of the Conciergerie, following Monsieur

Camusot's order, had sent Lucien to his cell through the underground passages, so as not to expose him to the gaze of the prisoners who were walking in the *préau.* The reader shall judge whether the sight of that promenade was of a nature to strongly affect the soul of a poet.

The *préau* of the Conciergerie is flanked on the quay by the Tour d'Argent and the Tour Bonbec, — the space between the two towers being exactly the width of the *préau.* The Galerie de Saint Louis, which leads from the Galerie Marchande to the Court of Appeals and to the Bonbec tower (in which, they say, St. Louis' study still exists) gives the length of the *préau* precisely. The solitary-confinement cells and the pistoles are under the Galerie Marchande. Marie Antoinette, whose dungeon was beneath the present secret cells, was led to the revolutionary tribunal, which held its sittings in the Court of Appeals, by a dreadful staircase cut in the thickness of the wall of the Galerie Marchande. One side of the *préau*, the side of the Galerie de Saint Louis, presents to the eye a perspective of Gothic columns, between which the architects of I know not what epoch have constructed two rows of cells to accommodate as many accused persons as possible, — filling up with brick and plaster the beautiful capitals, the pointed arches, and the shafts of columns of the glorious gallery. Beneath the room said to be Saint Louis' study, in the Bonbec tower, is a corkscrew staircase which leads to the cells. This prostitution of the noblest memories of France has a hideous effect.

At the height where Lucien now stood, his eye took

in the length of the beautiful gallery, and the details of the structure which united it to the two towers of which he saw the pointed roofs. He paused, amazed; his suicide was delayed by admiration. To-day the phenomena of hallucination are so fully admitted by science that this mirage of our senses, this strange faculty of our mind, is no longer disputed. Man, having under the pressure of a sentiment reached the point of be coming a monomaniac because of its intensity, often falls into the condition produced by opium, hashish, or the protoxide of nitrogen. Then appear to him spectres, phantoms; dreams take shapes; things ruined or decayed resume their primitive conditions. What had been but a mere idea in the brain becomes an animated creation. Science has come to believe in these days that under the effort of passions in their paroxysm the brain injects itself with blood, and that this congestion produces the play of visions in our waking state, — so reluctant is it to admit that thought is a living force!

Lucien saw the Palais in all its primitive beauty. The colonnade was young, and lithesome, and fresh. The dwelling of Saint Louis reappeared as it had been; he admired the Babylonian proportions and the Oriental fantasies of that cradle of our kings. He accepted this sublime vision as the poetic farewell to him of civilized creation. While arranging his means of death, he asked himself how it was that this marvellous sight existed unknown in Paris. He was two Luciens, — Lucien, the poet, moving through the middle-ages, beneath the arches and the towers of Saint Louis; and Lucien, making ready his suicide.

When Monsieur de Granville left his office to find, as

he had said, the ushers to fetch Lucien, the director of the Conciergerie met him, with an expression on his face that induced the attorney-general to re-enter it. In his hand the director held a packet, which he offered to Monsieur de Granville, saying: —

"Monsieur, here is a letter addressed to you by an accused person whose sad fate brings me here."

"Can it be Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré?" asked Monsieur de Granville, struck by a presentiment.

"Yes, monsieur. The warder in the *préau* heard the breaking of glass in the Pistole, and the person in the adjoining cell, hearing the death groans of the unfortunate young man, screamed violently. The warder came to me quite pale with the sight that had struck his eyes, — he had seen the prisoner hanging at the window by means of his cravat."

Though the director spoke in a low voice, the terrible cry uttered by Madame de Sérizy proved that in crucial circumstances our organs have incalculable power. The countess heard, or divined, the truth; and before Monsieur de Granville could turn round, before Monsieur de Sérizy or Monsieur de Bauvan could oppose her rapid movements, she had slipped, like a flash, through the door, and had reached the Galerie Marchande, along which she ran till she came to the staircase that leads to the rue de la Barillerie.

A lawyer was taking off his robe at the door of one of the booths in the gallery, where at that time they sold shoes, or leased robes and wigs. The countess asked him the way to the Conciergerie.

"Down there, and turn to the left; the entrance is on the Quai de l'Horloge, first arcade."

"That woman is mad," said the keeper of the booth; "some one should follow her."

No one could have followed her; she flew. Physicians must explain how women of society, whose strength is never used, can find in the crises of life the extraordinary power which they show. She rushed along the arcade toward the *guichet* with such rapidity that the sentinel did not see her enter. There she fell against the iron railing like a feather driven by the wind, and shook the iron bars with such fury that she broke the one she had seized. The two ends struck her on the breast, from which the blood flowed, and she sank down, crying, "Open! open!" in a voice which horrified the jailers.

The turnkeys ran to her.

"Open! I am sent by the attorney-general to save the dead!"

While the countess was going round by the rue de la Barillerie and the Quai de l'Horloge, her husband and Monsieur de Granville had hurried through the interior of the Palais to the Conciergerie, feeling sure of her intentions. In spite of their haste, they did not get there until she had fallen, fainting, at the railing, and was being lifted by the gendarmes, who came down from the guard-room. When the director, who accompanied the two gentlemen, appeared, the *guichet* was opened, and the countess carried into the office. There she sprang up, clasping her hands, and crying out: —

"To see him! to see him! Oh, messieurs, I will do no harm! But let me see him, dead or living! Ah! there you are, my friend. Oh, you are good!" she said to her husband, sinking down again.

"Let us carry her away," said Monsieur de Bauvan.

"No, let us go to Lucien's cell," said Monsieur de Granville, reading that wish in the alarmed eyes of Monsieur de Sérizy.

He lifted the countess, and took one arm, while Monsieur de Bauvan took the other.

"Monsieur," said the Comte de Sérizy to the director, "you will be as silent as death about all this."

"Be sure of that," replied the director. "You have done wisely. This lady —"

"She is my wife."

"Ah, excuse me! Well, she will certainly faint away entirely when she sees the body, and you can carry her while unconscious to a carriage."

"That is what I was thinking," said the count. "Will you send one of your men to tell my people in the rue du Harley to come round to the *guichet?* There is only one carriage there."

"We can save him," said the countess, walking with a courage and energy that surprised her companions. "There are many ways of restoring life," and she dragged along the two magistrates, crying out to the warder, "Go on, go on! quicker, quicker! one second may save his life!"

When the door of the cell was opened, and the countess saw Lucien hanging as his clothes might have hung in a wardrobe, she made a bound forward as if to seize him, but fell, with her face to the floor of the cell, uttering stifled cries that were like a gurgle.

Five minutes later she was being taken in the count's carriage to her own house, her husband kneeling beside her. The Comte de Bauvan had gone to summon her physician.

The director of the Conciergerie examined the broken iron bar of the outer gate of the *guichet*, and said to his clerk: —

"Nothing was spared to make those gates strong; the bars are wrought iron. They cost an immense sum; there must have been a straw in that bar."

The attorney-general, on reaching his office, said to Massol, whom he found waiting for him in the antechamber: —

"Monsieur, I wish you to put what I shall now dictate to you in the 'Gazette' to-morrow morning. You can write the beginning of the article, but this statement must be contained in it."

And he dictated as follows: —

"It is now admitted that Mademoiselle Esther killed herself voluntarily.

"The alibi, amply proved, of Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré, and his innocence, make it the more regrettable that he should have been arrested, because at the very moment the examining judge was about to sign the order for his release, the young man died suddenly."

"Your future, monsieur," said the count to Massol, "depends upon your discreetness as to the little service I now ask of you."

"As Monsieur le comte does me the honor to place confidence in me, I shall take the liberty," replied Massol, "of offering him a suggestion. This article may excite injurious comments upon the judiciary."

"The judiciary is strong enough to bear them," said the magistrate.

"Permit me, monsieur le comte! With a trifling change of phrase all danger can be avoided."

And he wrote as follows: —

"The legal proceedings had nothing to do with this sad event. The autopsy, which was immediately performed, showed that death was due to aneurism in its last stages. Had Monsieur de Rubempré been affected by his arrest, his death would have occurred earlier. We are able to declare that so far from being troubled by that arrest, he laughed at it, and told those who accompanied him from Fontainebleau to Paris that as soon as he appeared before a magistrate his innocence would appear."

"Will not that protect all?" asked the lawyer-journalist.

"I thank you, monsieur," replied the attorney-general.

Thus we see how great events of life are presented in the "local items," more or less veracious, of the daily press.

# THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS.

*To FRANZ LISTZ.*

*"They then saw in the ante-chamber to an inner cell, the dead body of the duchess lying on the floor upon a plank of her bed."*

Edmond Picard

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# SCENES FROM PARISIAN LIFE.

## THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS.[1]

### I.

In a Spanish town on an island of the Mediterranean there is a convent of the Bare-footed Carmelites, where the rule of the Order instituted by Saint Theresa is still kept with the primitive rigor of the reformation brought about by that illustrious woman. Extraordinary as this fact may seem, it is true. Though the monasteries of the Peninsula and those of the Continent were nearly all destroyed or broken up by the outburst of the French Revolution and the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars, yet on this island, protected by the British fleets, the wealthy convent and its peaceful inmates were sheltered from the dangers of change and general spoliation. The storms from all quarters which shook the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century subsided ere they reached this lonely rock near the coast of Andalusia. If the name of the great Emperor echoed fitfully upon its shores, it may be doubted whether the fantastic march of his glory or the flaming majesty of his meteoric life ever reached the comprehension of those saintly women kneeling in their distant cloister.

[1] The Duchesse de Langeais is one of the series of three stories called "Histoire Des Treize."

A conventual rigor, which was never relaxed, gave to this haven a special place in the thoughts and history of the Catholic world. The purity of its rule drew to its shelter from different parts of Europe sad women, whose souls deprived of human ties longed for the death in life which they found here in the bosom of God. No other convent was so fitted to wean the heart and teach it that aloofness from the things of this world which the religious life imperatively demands. On the Continent may be found a number of such Houses, nobly planned to meet the wants of their sacred purpose. Some are buried in the depths of solitary valleys; others hang, as it were, in mid-air above the hills, clinging to the mountain slopes or projecting from the verge of precipices. On all sides man has sought out the poesy of the infinite, the solemnity of silence: he has sought God; and on the mountain-tops, in the abyssmal depths, among the caverned cliffs, he has found Him. Yet nowhere as on this European islet, half African though it be, can he find such differing harmonies all blending to lift the soul and quell its springs of anguish; to cool its fevers, and give to the sorrows of life a bed of rest.

The monastery is built at the extremity of the island at its highest part, where the rock by some convulsion of Nature has been rent sharply down to the sea, and presents at all points keen angles and edges, slightly eaten away at the water-line by the action of the waves, but insurmountable to all approach. The rock is also protected from assault by dangerous reefs running far out from its base, over which frolic the blue waters of the Mediterranean. It is only from the sea that the

visitor can perceive the four principal parts of the square structure, which adheres minutely as to shape, height, and the piercing of its windows to the prescribed laws of monastic architecture. On the side towards the town the church hides the massive lines of the cloister, whose roof is covered with large tiles to protect it from winds and storms, and also from the fierce heat of the sun. The church, the gift of a Spanish family, looks down upon the town and crowns it. Its bold yet elegant façade gives a noble aspect to the little maritime city. Is it not a picture of terrestrial sublimity? See the tiny town with clustering roofs, rising like an amphitheatre from the picturesque port upward to the noble Gothic frontal of the church, from which spring the slender shafts of the bell-towers with their pointed finials: religion dominating life; offering to man the end and the way of living, — image of a thought altogether Spanish. Place this scene upon the bosom of the Mediterranean beneath an ardent sky; plant it with palms whose waving fronds mingle their green life with the sculptured leafage of the immutable architecture; look at the white fringes of the sea as it runs up the reef and they sparkle upon the sapphire of its wave; see the galleries and the terraces built upon the roofs of houses, where the inhabitants come at eve to breathe the flower-scented air as it rises through the tree-tops from their little gardens. Below, in the harbor, are the white sails. The serenity of night is coming on; listen to the notes of the organ, the chant of evening orisons, the echoing bells of the ships at sea: on all sides sound and peace, — oftenest peace.

Within the church are three naves, dark and mysterious. The fury of the winds evidently forbade the architect to build out lateral buttresses, such as adorn all other cathedrals, and between which little chapels are usually constructed. Thus the strong walls which flank the lesser naves shed no light into the building. Outside, their gray masses are shored up from point to point by enormous beams. The great nave and its two small lateral galleries are lighted solely by the rose-window of stained glass, which pierces with miraculous art the wall above the great portal, whose fortunate exposure permits a wealth of tracery and dentellated stonework belonging to that order of architecture miscalled Gothic.

The greater part of the three naves is given up to the inhabitants of the town who come to hear Mass and the Offices of the Church. In front of the choir is a latticed screen, within which brown curtains hang in ample folds, slightly parted in the middle to give a limited view of the altar and the officiating priest. The screen is divided at intervals by pillars that hold up a gallery within the choir which contains the organ. This construction, in harmony with the rest of the building, continues, in sculptured wood, the little columns of the lateral galleries which are supported by the pillars of the great nave. Thus it is impossible for the boldest curiosity, if any such should dare to mount the narrow balustrade of these galleries, to see farther into the choir than the octagonal stained windows which pierce the apse behind the high altar.

At the time of the French expedition into Spain for the purpose of re-establishing the authority of Ferdinand

VII., and after the fall of Cadiz, a French general who was sent to the island to obtain its recognition of the royal government prolonged his stay upon it that he might reconnoitre the convent and gain, if possible, admittance there. The enterprise was a delicate one. But a man of passion, — a man whose life had been, so to speak, a series of poems in action, who had lived romances instead of writing them; above all, a man of deeds, — might well be tempted by a project apparently so impossible. To open for himself legally the gates of a convent of women! The Pope and the Metropolitan Archbishop would scarcely sanction it. Should he use force or artifice? In case of failure was he not certain to lose his station and his military future, besides missing his aim? The Duc d'Angoulême was still in Spain; and of all the indiscretions which an officer in favor with the commander-in-chief could commit, this alone would be punished without pity. The general had solicited his present mission for the purpose of following up a secret hope, albeit no hope was ever so despairing. This last effort, however, was a matter of conscience. The house of these Bare-footed Carmelites was the only Spanish convent which had escaped his search. While crossing from the mainland, a voyage which took less than an hour, a strong presentiment of success had seized his heart. Since then, although he had seen nothing of the convent but its walls, nothing of the nuns, not so much as their brown habit; though he had heard only the echoes of their chanted liturgies, — he had gathered from those walls and from these chants faint indications that seemed to justify his fragile hope. Slight as the auguries thus capriciously awakened

might be, no human passion was ever more violently roused than the curiosity of this French general To the heart there are no insignificant events; it magnifies all things; it puts in the same balance the fall of an empire and the fall of a woman's glove, — and oftentimes the glove outweighs the empire. But let us give the facts in their actual simplicity: after the facts will come the feelings.

An hour after the expedition had landed on the island the royal authority was re-established. A few Spaniards who had taken refuge there after the fall of Cadiz embarked on a vessel which the general allowed them to charter for their voyage to London. There was thus neither resistance nor reaction. This little insular restoration could not, however, be accomplished without a Mass, at which both companies of the troops were ordered to be present. Not knowing the rigor of the Carmelite rule, the general hoped to gain in the church some information about the nuns who were immured in the convent, one of whom might be a being dearer to him than life, more precious even than honor. His hopes were at first cruelly disappointed. Mass was celebrated with the utmost pomp. In honor of this solemn occasion the curtains which habitually hid the choir were drawn aside, and gave to view the rich ornaments, the priceless pictures, and the shrines incrusted with jewels whose brilliancy surpassed that of the votive offerings fastened by the mariners of the port to the pillars of the great nave. The nuns, however, had retired to the seclusion of the organ gallery.

Yet in spite of this check, and while the Mass of thanksgiving was being sung, suddenly and secretly the

drama widened into an interest as profound as any that ever moved the heart of man. The Sister who played the organ roused an enthusiasm so vivid that not one soldier present regretted the order which had brought him to the church. The men listened to the music with pleasure; the officers were carried away by it. As for the general, he remained to all appearance calm and cold: the feelings with which he heard the notes given forth by the nun are among the small number of earthly things whose expression is withheld from impotent human speech, but which — like death, like God, like eternity — can be perceived only at their slender point of contact with the heart of man. By a strange chance the music of the organ seemed to be that of Rossini, — a composer who more than any other has carried human passion into the art of music, and whose works by their number and extent will some day inspire an Homeric respect. From among the scores of this fine genius the nun seemed to have chiefly studied that of Moses in Egypt; doubtless because the feelings of sacred music are there carried to the highest pitch. Perhaps these two souls — one so gloriously European, the other unknown — had met together in some intuitive perception of the same poetic thought. This idea occurred to two officers now present, true *dilettanti*, who no doubt keenly regretted the Théatre Favart in their Spanish exile. At last, at the Te Deum, it was impossible not to recognize a French soul in the character which the music suddenly took on. The triumph of his Most Christian Majesty evidently roused to joy the heart of that cloistered nun. Surely she was a Frenchwoman. Presently the patriotic spirit burst forth, sparkling like

a jet of light through the antiphonals of the organ, as the Sister recalled melodies breathing the delicacy of Parisian taste, and blended them with vague memories of our national anthems. Spanish hands could not have put into this graceful homage paid to victorious arms the fire that thus betrayed the origin of the musician.

"France is everywhere!" said a soldier.

The general left the church during the Te Deum; it was impossible for him to listen to it. The notes of the musician revealed to him a woman loved to madness; who had buried herself so deeply in the heart of religion, hid herself so carefully away from the sight of the world, that up to this time she had escaped the keen search of men armed not only with immense power, but with great sagacity and intelligence. The hopes which had wakened in the general's heart seemed justified as he listened to the vague echo of a tender and melancholy air, "La Fleuve du Tage," — a ballad whose prelude he had often heard in Paris in the boudoir of the woman he loved, and which this nun now used to express, amid the joys of the conquerors, the suffering of an exiled heart. Terrible moment! to long for the resurrection of a lost love; to find that love — still lost; to meet it mysteriously after five years in which passion, exasperated by the void, had been intensified by the useless efforts made to satisfy it.

Who is there that has not, once at least in his life, upturned everything about him, his papers and his receptacles, taxing his memory impatiently as he seeks some precious lost object; and then felt the ineffable pleasure of finding it after days consumed in the search,

after hoping and despairing of its recovery, — spending upon some trifle an excitement of mind almost amounting to a passion? Well, stretch this fury of search through five long years; put a woman, a heart, a love in the place of the insignificant trifle; lift the passion into the highest realms of feeling; and then picture to yourself an ardent man, a man with the heart of lion and the front of Jove, one of those men who command, and communicate to those about them, respectful terror, — you will then understand the abrupt departure of the general during the Te Deum, at the moment when the prelude of an air, once heard in Paris with delight under gilded ceilings, vibrated through the dark naves of the church by the sea.

He went down the hilly street which led up to the convent, without pausing until the sonorous echoes of the organ could no longer reach his ear. Unable to think of anything but of the love that like a volcanic eruption rent his heart, the French general only perceived that the Te Deum was ended when the Spanish contingent poured from the church. He felt that his conduct and appearance were open to ridicule, and he hastily resumed his place at the head of the cavalcade, explaining to the alcalde and to the governor of the town that a sudden indisposition had obliged him to come out into the air. Then it suddenly occurred to him to use the pretext thus hastily given, as a means of prolonging his stay on the island. Excusing himself on the score of increased illness, he declined to preside at the banquet given by the authorities of the island to the French officers, and took to his bed, after writing to the major-general that a passing illness compelled him

to turn over his command to the colonel. This commonplace artifice, natural as it was, left him free from all duties and able to seek the fulfilment of his hopes. Like a man essentially Catholic and monarchical, he inquired the hours of the various services, and showed the utmost interest in the duties of religion, — a piety which in Spain excited no surprise.

## II.

The following day, while the soldiers were embarking, the general went up to the convent to be present at vespers. He found the church deserted by the townspeople, who in spite of their natural devotion were attracted to the port by the embarkation of the troops. The Frenchman, glad to find himself alone in the church, took pains to make the clink of his spurs resound through the vaulted roof; he walked noisily, and coughed, and spoke aloud to himself, hoping to inform the nuns, but especially the Sister at the organ, that if the French soldiers were departing, one at least remained behind. Was this singular method of communication heard and understood? The general believed it was. In the Magnificat the organ seemed to give an answer which came to him in the vibrations of the air. The soul of the nun floated towards him on the wings of the notes she touched, quivering with the movements of the sound. The music burst forth with power; it glorified the church. This hymn of joy, consecrated by the sublime liturgy of Roman Christianity to the uplifting of the soul in presence of the splendors of the ever-living God, became the utterance of a heart terrified at its own happiness in presence of the splendors of a perishable love, which still lived, and came to move it once more beyond the tomb where this woman had buried herself, to rise again the bride of Christ.

The organ is beyond all question the finest, the most daring, the most magnificent of the instruments created by human genius. It is an orchestra in itself, from which a practised hand may demand all things; for it expresses all things. Is it not, as it were, a coign of vantage, where the soul may poise itself ere it springs into space, bearing, as it flies, the listening mind through a thousand scenes of life towards the infinite which parts earth from heaven? The longer a poet listens to its gigantic harmonies, the more fully will he comprehend that between kneeling humanity and the God hidden by the dazzling rays of the Holy of Holies, the hundred voices of terrestrial choirs can alone bridge the vast distance and interpret to Heaven the prayers of men in all the omnipotence of their desires, in the diversities of their woe, with the tints of their meditations and their ecstasies, with the impetuous spring of their repentance, and the thousand imaginations of their manifold beliefs. Yes! beneath these soaring vaults the harmonies born of the genius of sacred things find a yet unheard-of grandeur, which adorns and strengthens them. Here the dim light, the deep silence, the voices alternating with the solemn tones of the organ, seem like a veil through which the luminous attributes of God himself pierce and radiate.

Yet all these sacred riches now seemed flung like a grain of incense on the frail altar of an earthly love, in presence of the eternal throne of a jealous and avenging Deity. The joy of the nun had not the gravity which properly belongs to the solemnity of the Magnificat. She gave to the music rich and graceful modulations, whose rhythms breathed of human gayety;

her measures ran into the brilliant cadences of a great singer striving to express her love, and the notes rose buoyantly like the carol of a bird by the side of its mate. At moments she darted back into the past, as if to sport there or to weep there for an instant. Her changing moods had something discomposed about them, like the agitations of a happy woman rejoicing at the return of her lover. Then, as these supple strains of passionate emotion ceased, the soul that spoke returned upon itself; the musician passed from the major to the minor key, and told her hearer the story of her present. She revealed to him her long melancholy, the slow malady of her moral being, — every day a feeling crushed, every night a thought subdued, hour by hour a heart burning down to ashes. After soft modulations the music took on slowly, tint by tint, the hue of deepest sadness. Soon it poured forth in echoing torrents the well-springs of grief, till suddenly the higher notes struck clear like the voice of angels, as if to tell to her lost love — lost, but not forgotten — that the reunion of their souls must be in heaven, and only there: hope most precious! Then came the Amen. In that no joy, no tears, nor sadness, nor regrets, but a return to God. The last chord that sounded was grave, solemn, terrible. The musician revealed the nun in the garb of her vocation; and as the thunder of the basses rolled away, causing the hearer to shudder through his whole being, she seemed to sink into the tomb from which for a brief moment she had risen. As the echoes slowly ceased to vibrate along the vaulted roofs, the church, made luminous by the music, fell suddenly into profound obscurity.

The general, carried away by the course of this powerful genius, had followed her, step by step, along her way. He comprehended in their full meaning the pictures that gleamed through that burning symphony; for him those chords told all. For him, as for the Sister, this poem of sound was the future, the past, the present. Music, even the music of an opera, is it not to tender and poetic souls, to wounded and suffering hearts, a text which they interpret as their memories need? If the heart of a poet must be given to a musician, must not poetry and love be listeners ere the great musical works of art are understood? Religion, love, and music: are they not the triple expression of one fact, — the need of expansion, the need of touching with their own infinite the infinite beyond them, which is in the fibre of all noble souls? These three forms of poesy end in God, who alone can unwind the knot of earthly emotion. Thus this holy human trinity joins itself to the holiness of God, of whom we make to ourselves no conception unless we surround him by the fires of love and the golden cymbals of music and light and harmony.

The French general divined that on this desert rock, surrounded by the surging seas, the nun had cherished music to free her soul of the excess of passion that consumed it. Did she offer her love as a homage to God? Did the love triumph over the vows she had made to him? Questions difficult to answer. But, beyond all doubt, the lover had found in a heart dead to the world a love as passionate as that which burned within his own.

When vespers ended he returned to the alcalde's house where he was quartered. Giving himself over, a

willing prey, to the delights of a success long expected, laboriously sought, his mind at first could dwell on nothing else, — he was still loved. Solitude had nourished the love of that heart, just as his own had thriven on the barriers, successively surmounted, which this woman had placed between herself and him. This ecstasy of the spirit had its natural duration; then came the desire to see this woman, to withdraw her from God, to win her back to himself, — a bold project, welcome to a bold man. After the evening repast, he retired to his room to escape questions and think in peace, and remained plunged in deep meditation throughout the night. He rose early and went to Mass. He placed himself close to the latticed screen, his brow touching the brown curtain. He longed to rend it away; but he was not alone, his host had accompanied him, and the least imprudence might compromise the future of his love and ruin his new-found hopes. The organ was played, but not by the same hand; the musician of the last two days was absent from its key-board. All was chill and pale to the general. Was his mistress worn out by the emotions which had wellnigh broken down his own vigorous heart? Had she so truly shared and comprehended his faithful and eager love that she now lay exhausted and dying in her cell? At the moment when such thoughts as these rose in the general's mind, he heard beside him the voice beloved; he knew the clear ring of its tones. The voice, slightly changed by a tremor which gave it the timid grace and modesty of a young girl, detached itself from the volume of song, like the voice of a prima-donna in the harmonies of her final notes. It gave to the ear an impression like the effect to the

eye of a fillet of silver or gold threading a dark frieze. It was indeed she! Still Parisian, she had not lost her gracious charm, though she had forsaken the coronet and adornments of the world for the frontlet and serge of a Carmelite. Having revealed her love the night before in the praises addressed to the Lord of all, she seemed now to say to her lover: "Yes, it is I: I am here. I love forever; yet I am aloof from love. Thou shalt hear me: my soul shall enfold thee; but I must stay beneath the brown shroud of this choir, from which no power can tear me. Thou canst not see me."

"It is she!" whispered the general to himself, as he raised his head and withdrew his hands from his face; for he had not been able to bear erect the storm of feeling that shook his heart as the voice vibrated through the arches and blended with the murmur of the waves. A storm raged without, yet peace was within the sanctuary. The rich voice still caressed the ear, and fell like balm upon the parched heart of the lover; it flowered in the air about him, from which he breathed the emanations of her spirit exhaling love through the aspirations of its prayer.

The alcalde came to rejoin his guest, and found him bathed in tears at the elevation of the Host which was chanted by the nun. Surprised to find such devotion in a French officer, he invited the confessor of the convent to join them at supper, and informed the general, to whom no news had ever given such pleasure, of what he had done. During the supper the general made the confessor the object of much attention, and thus confirmed the Spaniards in the high opinion they had

formed of his piety. He inquired with grave interest the number of the nuns, and asked details about the revenues of the convent and its wealth, with the air of a man who politely wished to choose topics which occupied the mind of the good old priest. Then he inquired about the life led by the sisters. Could they go out? Could they see friends?

"Senhor," said the venerable priest, "the rule is severe. If the permission of our Holy Father must be obtained before a woman can enter a house of Saint Bruno,[1] the like rule exists here. It is impossible for any man to enter a convent of the Bare-footed Carmelites, unless he is a priest delegated by the archbishop for duty in the House. No nun can go out. It is true, however, that the Great Saint, Mother Theresa, did frequently leave her cell. A Mother-superior can alone, under authority of the archbishop, permit a nun to see her friends, especially in case of illness. As this convent is one of the chief Houses of the Order, it has a Mother-superior residing in it. We have several foreigners, — among them a Frenchwoman, Sister Theresa, the one who directs the music in the chapel."

"Ah!" said the general, feigning surprise. "She must have been gratified by the triumph of the House of Bourbon?"

"I told them the object of the Mass; they are always rather curious."

"Perhaps Sister Theresa has some interests in France; she might be glad to receive some news, or ask some questions?"

"I think not; or she would have spoken to me."

[1] Founder of the Order of the Chartreux.

"As a compatriot," said the general, "I should be curious to see — that is, if it were possible, if the superior would consent, if —

"At the grating, even in the presence of the reverend Mother, an interview would be absolutely impossible for any ordinary man, no matter who he was; but in favor of a liberator of a Catholic throne and our holy religion, possibly, in spite of the rigid rule of our Mother Theresa, the rule might be relaxed," said the confessor. "I will speak about it."

"How old is Sister Theresa?" asked the lover, who dared not question the priest about the beauty of the nun.

"She is no longer of any age," said the good old man, with a simplicity which made the general shudder.

## III.

The next day, before the *siesta*, the confessor came to tell the general that Sister Theresa and the Mother-superior consented to receive him at the grating that evening before the hour of vespers. After the *siesta*, during which the Frenchman had whiled away the time by walking round the port in the fierce heat of the sun, the priest came to show him the way into the convent.

He was guided through a gallery which ran the length of the cemetery, where fountains and trees and numerous arcades gave a cool freshness in keeping with that still and silent spot. When they reached the end of this long gallery, the priest led his companion into a parlor, divided in the middle by a grating covered with a brown curtain. On the side which we must call public, and where the confessor left the general, there was a wooden bench along one side of the wall; some chairs, also of wood, were near the grating. The ceiling was of wood, crossed by heavy beams of the evergreen oak, without ornament. Daylight came from two windows in the division set apart for the nuns, and was absorbed by the brown tones of the room; so that it barely showed the picture of the great black Christ, and those of Saint Theresa and the Blessed Virgin, which hung on the dark panels of the walls.

The feelings of the general turned, in spite of their violence, to a tone of melancholy. He grew calm in

these calm precincts. Something mighty as the grave seized him beneath these chilling rafters. Was it not the eternal silence, the deep peace, the near presence of the infinite? Through the stillness came the fixed thought of the cloister, — that thought which glides through the air in the half-lights, and is in all things, — the thought unchangeable; nowhere seen, which yet grows vast to the imagination; the all-comprising word, *the peace of God.* It enters there, with living power, into the least religious heart. Convents of men are not easily conceivable; man seems feeble and unmanly in them. He is born to act, to fulfil a life of toil; and he escapes it in his cell. But in a monastery of women what strength to endure, and yet what touching weakness! A man may be pushed by a thousand sentiments into the depths of an abbey; he flings himself into them as from a precipice. But the woman is drawn only by one feeling; she does not unsex herself, — she espouses holiness. You may say to the man, Why did you not struggle? but to the cloistered woman life is a struggle still.

The general found in this mute parlor of the sea-girt convent memories of himself. Love seldom reaches upward to solemnity; but love in the bosom of God, — is there nothing solemn there? Yes, more than a man has the right to hope for in this nineteenth century, with our manners and our customs what they are. The general's soul was one on which such impressions act. His nature was noble enough to forget self-interest, honors, Spain, the world, or Paris, and rise to the heights of feeling roused by this unspeakable termination of his long pursuit. What could be more tragic?

How many emotions held these lovers, reunited at last on this granite ledge far out at sea, yet separated by an idea, an impassable barrier. Look at this man, saying to himself, "Can I triumph over God in that heart?"

A slight noise made him quiver. The brown curtain was drawn back; he saw in the half-light a woman standing, but her face was hidden from him by the projection of a veil, which lay in many folds upon her head. According to the rule of the Order she was clothed in the brown garb whose color has become proverbial. The general could not see the naked feet, which would have told him the frightful emaciation of her body; yet through the thick folds of the coarse robe that swathed her his heart divined that tears and prayers and passion and solitude had wasted her away.

The chill hand of a woman, doubtless the Mother-superior, held back the curtain, and the general, examining this unwelcome witness of the interview, encountered the deep grave eyes of an old nun, very aged, whose clear, even youthful, glance belied the wrinkles that furrowed her pale face.

"Madame la duchesse," he said, in a voice shaken by emotion, to the Sister, who bowed her head, "does your companion understand French?"

"There is no duchess here," replied the nun. "You are in presence of Sister Theresa. The woman whom you call my companion is my Mother in God, my superior here below."

These words humbly uttered by a voice that once harmonized with the luxury and elegance in which this

woman had lived queen of the world of Paris, that fell from lips whose language had been of old so gay, so mocking, struck the general as if with an electric shock.

"My holy Mother speaks only Latin and Spanish," she added.

"I understand neither. Dear Antoinette, make her my excuses."

As she heard her name softly uttered by a man once so hard to her, the nun was shaken by emotion, betrayed only by the light quivering of her veil, on which the light now fully fell.

"My brother," she said, passing her sleeve beneath her veil, perhaps to wipe her eyes, "my name is Sister Theresa."

Then she turned to the Mother, and said to her in Spanish a few words which the general plainly heard. He knew enough of the language to understand it, perhaps to speak it. "My dear Mother, this gentleman presents to you his respects, and begs you to excuse him for not laying them himself at your feet; but he knows neither of the languages which you speak."

The old woman slowly bowed her head; her countenance took an expression of angelic sweetness, tempered, nevertheless, by the consciousness of her power and dignity.

"You know this gentleman?" she asked, with a piercing glance at the Sister.

"Yes, my Mother."

"Retire to your cell, my daughter," said the Superior in a tone of authority.

The general hastily withdrew to the shelter of the curtain, lest his face should betray the anguish these

words cost him; but he fancied that the penetrating eyes of the Superior followed him even into the shadow. This woman, arbiter of the frail and fleeting joy he had won at such cost, made him afraid: he trembled, he whom a triple range of cannon could not shake.

The duchess walked to the door, but there she turned: "My Mother," she said, in a voice horribly calm, "this Frenchman is one of my brothers."

"Remain, therefore, my daughter," said the old woman, after a pause.

The jesuitism of this answer revealed such love and such regret, that a man of less firmness than the general would have betrayed his joy in the midst of a peril so novel to him. But what value could there be in the words, looks, gestures of a love that must be hidden from the eyes of a lynx, the claws of a tiger? The Sister came back.

"You see, my brother," she said, "what I have dared to do that I might for one moment speak to you of your salvation, and tell you of the prayers which day by day my soul offers to heaven on your behalf. I have committed a mortal sin, — I have lied. How many days of penitence to wash out that lie! But I shall suffer for you. You know not, my brother, the joy of loving in heaven, of daring to avow affections that religion has purified, that have risen to the highest regions, that at last we know and feel with the soul alone. If the doctrines — if the spirit of the saint to whom we owe this refuge had not lifted me above the anguish of earth to a world, not indeed where she is, but far above my lower life, I could not have seen you now. But I can see you, I can hear you, and remain calm."

"Antoinette," said the general, interrupting these words, "suffer me to see you — you, whom I love passionately, to madness, as you once would have had me love you."

"Do not call me Antoinette, I implore you: memories of the past do me harm. See in me only the Sister Theresa, a creature trusting all to the divine pity. And," she added, after a pause, "subdue yourself, my brother. Our Mother would separate us instantly if your face betrayed earthly passions, or your eyes shed tears."

The general bowed his head, as if to collect himself; when he again lifted his eyes to the grating he saw between two bars the pale, emaciated, but still ardent face of the nun. Her complexion, where once had bloomed the loveliness of youth, — where once there shone the happy contrast of a pure, clear whiteness with the colors of a Bengal rose, — now had the tints of a porcelain cup through which a feeble light showed faintly. The beautiful hair of which this woman was once so proud was shaven; a white band bound her brows and was wrapped around her face. Her eyes, circled with dark shadows due to the austerities of her life, glanced at moments with a feverish light, of which their habitual calm was but the mask. In a word, of this woman nothing remained but her soul.

"Ah! you will leave this tomb — you, who are my life! You belonged to me; you were not free to give yourself — not even to God. Did you not promise to sacrifice all to the least of my commands? Will you now think me worthy to claim that promise, if I tell you what I have done for your sake? I have sought

you through the whole world. For five years you have been the thought of every instant, the occupation of every hour, of my life. My friends — friends all-powerful as you know — have helped me to search the convent of France, Spain, Italy, Sicily, America. My love has deepened with every fruitless search. Many a long journey I have taken on a false hope. I have spent my life and the strong beatings of my heart about the walls of cloisters. I will not speak to you of a fidelity unlimited. What is it? — nothing compared to the infinitude of my love! If in other days your remorse was real, you cannot hesitate to follow me now."

"You forget that I am not free."

"The duke is dead," he said hastily.

Sister Theresa colored. "May Heaven receive him!" she said, with quick emotion: "he was generous to me. But I did not speak of those ties: one of my faults was my willingness to break them without scruple for you."

"You speak of your vows," cried the general, frowning. "I little thought that anything would weigh in your heart against our love. But do not fear, Antoinette; I will obtain a brief from the Holy Father which will absolve your vows. I will go to Rome; I will petition every earthly power; if God himself came down from heaven I —"

"Do not blaspheme!"

"Do not fear how God would see it! Ah! I wish I were as sure that you will leave these walls with me; that to-night — to-night, you would embark at the feet of these rocks. Let us go to find happiness! I know

not where — at the ends of the earth! With me you will come back to life, to health — in the shelter of my love!"

"Do not say these things," replied the Sister; "you do not know what you now are to me. I love you better than I once loved you. I pray to God for you daily. I see you no longer with the eyes of my body. If you but knew, Armand, the joy of being able, without shame, to spend myself upon a pure love which God protects! You do not know the joy I have in calling down the blessings of heaven upon your head. I never pray for myself: God will do with me according to his will. But you — at the price of my eternity I would win the assurance that you are happy in this world, that you will be happy in another throughout the ages. My life eternal is all that misfortunes have left me to give you. I have grown old in grief; I am no longer young or beautiful. Ah! you would despise a nun who returned to be a woman; no sentiment, not even maternal love, could absolve her. What could you say to me that would shake the unnumbered reflections my heart has made in five long years, — and which have changed it, hollowed it, withered it? Ah! I should have given something less sad to God!

"What can I say to you, dear Antoinette? I will say that I love you; that affection, love, true love, the joy of living in a heart all ours, — wholly ours, without one reservation, — is so rare, so difficult to find, that I once doubted you; I put you to cruel tests. But to-day I love and trust you with all the powers of my soul. If you will follow me I will listen through-

out life to no voice but thine. I will look on no face —"

"Silence, Armand! you shorten the sole moments which are given to us to see each other here below."

"Antoinette! will you follow me?"

"I never leave you. I live in your heart — but with another power than that of earthly pleasure, or vanity, or selfish joy. I live here for you, pale and faded, in the bosom of God. If God is just, you will be happy."

"Phrases! you give me phrases! But if I will to have you pale and faded, — if I cannot be happy unless you are with me? What! will you forever place duties before my love? Shall I never be above all things else in your heart? In the past you put the world, or self — I know not what — above me; to-day it is God, it is my salvation. In this Sister Theresa I recognize the duchess; ignorant of the joys of love, unfeeling beneath a pretence of tenderness! You do not love me! you never loved me! —"

"Oh, my brother! —"

"You will not leave this tomb. You love my soul, you say: well! you shall destroy it forever and ever. I will kill myself —"

"My Mother!" cried the nun, "I have lied to you: this man is my lover."

The curtain fell. The general, stunned, heard the doors close with violence.

"She loves me still!" he cried, comprehending all that was revealed in the cry of the nun. "I will find means to carry her away!"

He left the island immediately, and returned to the headquarters of the army on the peninsula. There he

pleaded continued illness, and obtained leave of absence to return to France.

The following circumstances will explain the situation in which we found the persons whose history we are relating.

## IV.

THAT which is called in France the Faubourg Saint-Germain is not a quarter of Paris, nor a sect, nor an institution, nor indeed anything that can be definitely expressed. The Place Royale, the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the Chaussée d'Antin, all contain mansions where the atmosphere of the Faubourg Saint-Germain reigns. Thus the whole of the faubourg is not in the faubourg. Persons born far from its influence feel it, and affiliate themselves with its spirit; while others, born in its purple, are by nature banished from it. The manners, the forms of speech, in a word the traditions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain have been to Paris for the last forty years what the Court was to it in former days; what the Hôtel Saint-Paul was in the fourteenth century, the Louvre in the fifteenth, the Palais, the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the Place Royale in the sixteenth, and, finally, Versailles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Through all phases of history the Paris of the upper classes and the nobility has had its centre, — just as the Paris of the people has had, and always will have, a quarter of its own. This singular and recurring separation affords matter of reflection for those who seek to observe or to paint the various social strata; and perhaps we may be allowed to search out its causes, not only to explain the characters of our story, but to

subserve important interests, — more important to the future than to the present, unless, indeed, the teachings of experience seem as foolish to political parties as they are to youth.

The great lords, and the men of wealth who imitate the lords, have at all epochs withdrawn their homes from crowded precincts. The Duc d'Uzès built during the reign of Louis XIV., in a corner of Paris then a solitude, the noble hôtel at whose gates he placed the fountain of the Rue Montmartre, — a beneficent act which, in addition to his many virtues, made him an object of such popular veneration that all the people of the quarter followed him to his grave. But no sooner were the fortifications levelled, than the waste ground beyond the boulevard was covered with houses, and the d'Uzès family abandoned their mansion, which is now occupied by a banker. Not long after this the nobility, hampered by the invasion of shops, abandoned the Place Royale and the neighborhood of the busy Parisian centres, to cross the river and breathe at its ease in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where palaces had already risen round the mansion built by Louis XIV. for the Duc de Maine, the Benjamin of his legitimatized sons.

To persons accustomed to the elegancies of life there is little that is more offensive than the tumult, cries, mud, ill-savor, and close quarters of the populous streets of a city. The habits of a shop-keeping or manufacturing quarter are in constant collision with the habits of the great world. Commerce and labor are going to bed just as aristocracy is going to dinner: the one is in noisy activity when the other is in need of repose. Their estimates are on differing scales: that of the one

is all gain; that of the other, lavish expenditure. Thus their manners and customs are diametrically opposed. This is said with no disdainful meaning. An aristocracy is, in a way, the thought of a society, as the middle-class and the working-class are its organism and its action. From this comes the need of different sites and locations for their differing forces; and out of this antagonism grows an apparent antipathy which leads to complicated activities, — all working, however, to a common end. These social oppositions are the logical result of constitutional codes; and people of all classes would think it prodigiously absurd if the Prince de Montmorency chose to live in the Rue Saint-Martin at the corner of the street which bears his name, or if the Duc de Fitz-James, descendant of the royal Scottish race, had his hôtel in the Rue Marie-Stuart near the Rue Montorgueil. *Sint ut sint, aut non sint*, — this fine pontifical saying might serve as a motto for the great world of every nation. The fact, belonging to all epochs and accepted always by the people, bears within it reasons of state; it is at one and the same time an effect and a cause, a principle and a law. The masses have a sound common-sense which never weakens unless evil-disposed men excite their passions. This common-sense rests on the essential need of a common order, — as truly felt at Moscow as in London, in Geneva as in Calcutta. Hence, wherever you assemble families of unequal fortunes within a given space you will see them breaking up into circles of first and second and third classes. Equality may be a *right*, but no human power can convert it into a *fact*.

It would be well for the happiness of France if this truth could be popularized. The least intelligent classes feel the benefit of a public policy which harmonizes and coalesces the needs of all. This harmony is the poetic side of order; and the French nation feels a lively need of order. The co-operation of all interests, — *unity* in short, to give our meaning in one word, — is it not the simplest expression of the principle of order? Architecture, music, poetry, all rest, in France especially, upon this principle, which moreover is written in the depths of our pure, clear language, — and language is, and ever will be, the infallible formula of a nation. This is why our people select poetic music well modulated, seize simple ideas, and choose incisive themes which are packed with thought. France is the only land where a little phrase is able to make a great revolution. The French masses have never revolted from any other reason than the desire to put in unison men, principles, and things. Thus no nation has ever so well understood the idea of unity, possibly because no other has so fully thought out political necessities: as to this, history has never found it in the background. France is often deceived, but as a woman is deceived, — by generous ideas, by ardent sentiments, whose bearings at first escape calculation.

The first characteristic trait of the Faubourg Saint-Germain is the splendor of its mansions, their large gardens and their stillness, in keeping with its ancient territorial magnificence. Is not this space intervening between a class and the whole city-full a material expression of the moral distance which separates them? In all created things the head has its typical place. If,

perchance, a nation fells its chief at its feet, it discovers sooner or later that it has cut its own throat. A nation will not admit that it can die; therefore, at once it sets to work to reconstruct for itself a head. When a nation has no longer the strength to do this it perishes, — as Rome, Venice, and others have perished. The distinction placed by different habits and manners between the two spheres of social activity and social superiority implies, necessarily, an actual and commanding worth at the aristocratic summits. Whenever, in any State and under any form of government, the patricians fall below the conditions of true superiority they lose their strength, and the people cast them out. The people will insist on seeing in their hands, in their hearts, in their heads, fortune, power, and the initiative, — speech, intelligence, and glory. Without this triple strength their privileges vanish. The people, like women, love power in the hands of those who govern them; their love is not given where they do not respect; they will not yield obedience to those who do not command their homage. A despised aristocracy is like a *roi fainéant*, a husband in petticoats; it is a nothing before it is nought.

Thus the sundering of the great from the body of the people, their separate habits, in a word the customs and usages of the patrician caste, is both the symbol of its real power and the cause of its destruction when that power is lost. The Faubourg Saint-Germain has allowed itself to be temporarily cast aside because it has chosen not to recognize the conditions of its existence, which existence could easily have been perpetuated. It ought to have had the good faith to see, as the

English aristocracy saw, that institutions reach climacteric years, when terms no longer have their past meaning, when ideas clothe themselves in new garments, when the conditions of political life change without any essential change in their being. These thoughts have developments which belong to our tale, both in definition of its causes and in explanation of its facts.

The grandeur of châteaus and aristocratic homes, the luxury of their details, the sumptuousness of their appointments; the *orbit* in which the fortunate master, born to wealth, moves without let or hindrance; the habit of never descending to the petty daily calculations of life; the leisure at his disposal, the superior education and training which he acquires from childhood; in short, all those traditions of high breeding that give him a social power which his fellows of another class can barely counterbalance by study, by force of will, by tenacious clinging to some vocation, — all these things should lift the soul of the man who from his youth possesses these privileges, and fill him with that high respect for himself of which nobility of the heart in keeping with the nobility of his name is the natural consequence. This can be truly said of certain families. Here and there in the Faubourg Saint-Germain may be found noble characters, exceptions which weigh against the widespread egoism which has been the ruin of that exclusive world.

All these advantages come to the French aristocracy as they do to the patrician order of all nations, because their existence rests on *domain*, — domain of the soil, which is the only solid base of a society. Nevertheless, those advantages remain with such patricians only

so long as they fulfil the conditions upon which the people leave them in their possession. They hold them as moral fiefs, the tenure of which has its obligations to the sovereign, — and in our day the sovereign is the people. Times have changed; so have weapons. The knight who once was armed with coat of mail and halberd, and went to war with lance and banner, must now give proof of the qualities of his mind. In those days, a brave heart; in our day, a strong brain. Art, science, and gold are the social triangle on which the arms of power are now blazoned, and from which modern aristocracy proceeds. A noble work is the equal of a noble name. The Rothschilds, those modern Fuggers, are princes *de facto*. A great artist is an oligarchy; he represents his century, and becomes almost always a law. Thus with the gift of language: the engines at high pressure of an author, the genius of a poet, the perseverance of a man of business, the will of a statesman which combines in one man many dazzling qualities, the sword of a general, the triumph of individuals in the many ways of life which give them power over society, — in all these things the patrician class should seek the same monopoly which they once held in the matter of material strength.

To remain at the head of a nation it is necessary to know how to lead it; to be the soul and the mind to guide the fingers. How can we lead if we have not the qualities of command? What is the marshal's baton worth if it is not wielded by the trained hand of a captain? The Faubourg Saint-Germain has played with such batons and thought them the equivalent of strength. It has ignored the charter of its existence. Instead of

throwing aside symbols which offended the feelings of the people and holding fast to the essentials of its power, it has let the middle classes seize the power while it clung with fatal persistency to its flag, and neglected the laws imposed upon it by its numerical weakness. An aristocracy which is scarcely a thousandth part of society must to-day, as heretofore, multiply its means of action to carry in the great crises of history a weight equal to that of the masses. In our day means of action lie in actual moral strength, not in historical tradition. Unhappily in France the nobility, still swelling with a sense of its ancient and vanished power, excites prejudice against which it defends itself with difficulty. Perhaps this is a national defect. A Frenchman, above all other men, never steps down from his position; he steps from his own place to the place above him, — with little pity for those he steps over, but much envy of others still above him. He may have a great deal of heart, but he prefers to listen to his head. This national instinct which sends Frenchmen always to the advance, this vanity which eats into their fortune and rules them as rigidly as the principle of economy rules a Dutchman, has for three centuries absolutely dominated our nobility, — which in this respect has been eminently French.

Since the establishment of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, — a revolution of aristocracy which began on the day when the monarchy left Versailles, — it has, allowing for a few lapses, allied itself with power, which will always in France be more or less Faubourg Saint-Germain. Hence its defeat in 1830. In that crisis it was like an army operating without a base. It had not

profited by the peace to plant itself in the heart of the nation: it failed to do so from a defect of training, through a total inability to survey the whole field of its interests. It slew a positive future in favor of a doubtful present. The reason of this blundering policy may have been, that the material and moral distance which as a class it endeavored to maintain between itself and the rest of the nation resulted, after forty years, in developing the personal sentiment of distinction at the expense of the patriotism of caste. Formerly, when the French nobility were rich and powerful they knew in moments of danger where to choose their leaders and how to obey them. As soon as they became less eminent they became more undisciplined. Each man sought, as in the Eastern Empire, to be an emperor: perceiving their equality in weakness, each fancied himself individually superior.

Every family ruined by the Revolution and by the equal division of property thought only of itself instead of considering the great family of its caste, and fancied that if each were enriched the whole body would be strong. An error. Wealth is but a sign of power. These families, made up of persons who maintained the traditions of courtesy, of true elegance, of pure language, of the pride and reserve of nobles in the daily current of their lives, — occupations which become petty when made the chief objects of existence, to which they should be only accessory, — had a certain intrinsic worth, which judged by its surface appeared to have only a nominal value. Not one of these families had the courage to ask itself honestly, Are we capable of holding power? They flung themselves into it,

as the lawyers did later in 1830. Instead of becoming a protector, — the natural duty of the great, — the Faubourg Saint-Germain showed itself grasping as a *parvenu*. The day which proved to the most observing nation upon earth that the restored nobility had organized power and the budget for its own selfish profit, the faubourg received a mortal wound. It was pretending to be an aristocracy, when in fact it could no longer be anything but an oligarchy, — two widely different systems, as any man clever enough to read intelligently the ancestral names of these lords of the Upper House will understand.

Undoubtedly, the royal government was well-intentioned; but it constantly forgot that the people must be trained to its own desires, even to its desires of happiness, and that France, capricious as a woman, must be made happy or unhappy in her own way. Had there been many Ducs de Laval, the throne of the eldest branch would have been as firm as that of the House of Hanover. In 1814, and above all in 1820, the French nobility ruled the best-informed epoch, the most aristocratic middle-class, and the most feminine nation in the world. The Faubourg Saint-Germain could easily have led and amused that middle-class, then intoxicated with its rise, and enamoured of the arts and sciences. But the petty lords of this great epoch in national intelligence hated and misunderstood arts and sciences. They did not even know how to present religion, of which they stood greatly in need, under the poetic aspects which would have won it love. While Lamartine, Lamennais, Montalembert, and other writers with talents essentially poetic, revivified and

uplifted religious ideas, those who bungled the government made religion harsh and unacceptable. No nation was ever so amenable; she was like a woman weary of resisting, who lets herself be won: and no government ever made such blundering mistakes. France and womanhood would seem to love faults! To reinstate itself, to found a great oligarchical government, the *noblesse* of the faubourg should have searched its borders in good faith to find the counter-genius of Napoleon; it should have demanded of its own loins a constitutional Richelieu. If such genius was not within it, it should have sought it in lonely garrets, — where perhaps it was then dying of inanition, — and transfused that blood into its veins, just as the English House of Lords gains vigor through its new creations. But the great system of English Toryism is too vast for little heads; and such an importation of customs would have taken more time than the French, ever willing to pay for one success by one *fiasco*, would have given to it. Moreover, far from having that recuperative policy which seeks strength wherever God himself has put it, these little-great nobles hated every strength outside of their own.

Thus it was that the Faubourg Saint-Germain, instead of renewing a patrician youth, grew aged. Etiquette, an institution of secondary importance, could have been maintained if kept for great occasions; but etiquette became a daily warfare, and instead of keeping to its place as a matter of art or magnificence it became a question of the maintenance of power. If at this time the throne was in want of a counsellor equal to the importance of the events of the period, the aristocracy

was even more in want of that due knowledge of public interests which might have supplied the other deficiency. It balked at the marriage of Monsieur de Talleyrand, the only man of the time who had the metal and the head to recast political systems and gloriously revive France. The faubourg mocked at statesmen who were not nobles, and yet it furnished no nobles able to be statesmen.

The nobility might have rendered enormous service to the country by improving their soil, constructing roads and canals, raising the character of the country judges, making themselves, in short, an active territorial power; but instead of this they sold their lands to gamble at the Bourse. They might have won from the middle classes men of talent and action by opening their ranks to admit them. But they chose, on the contrary, to attack them, — and attack them unarmed, for they now held only as a tradition the force which they once possessed. To their own injury they retained only so much of their past fortunes as still supported a haughty pride.

Content with their ancient glory, not one of these families put their sons into the numerous careers which the nineteenth century held out to them. Their youth, thus excluded from the business of life, danced at the balls of Madame instead of pursuing in Paris, under the inspiration of the fresh conscientious young talent of the Empire and the Republic, the work which these great families might so easily have begun in all departments, had they conformed to the spirit of the age, and remodelled their caste according to the demands of the century.

Gathered in its Faubourg Saint-Germain, where the spirit of old feudal oppositions still lingered and mingled with that of the old Court, the aristocracy, coldly united with the Tuileries, existing only on one ground, and above all constituted as it was in the Chamber of Peers, was easy to overthrow. As part of the bone and sinew of the country it would have been indestructible; but cornered in the faubourg, appended to the Court, spread on the budget, one blow of an axe was all that was needed to cut the frail thread of its life. The commonplace figure of a little lawyer came forward to deal the blow. Notwithstanding the fine speech of Monsieur Royer-Collard, the hereditary rights of the peerage and its entailed estates fell before the pasquinades of a man who boasted that he had saved many heads from the executioner, but who now guillotined, awkwardly enough, a great institution.

In all this we may find warnings and instruction. If the French oligarchy is to have no future life, there would be sad cruelty in thus gibbeting it after death: we ought rather to think of burying it with honors. But if the surgeon's knife is sharp to feel, it often gives life to the dying. The Faubourg Saint-Germain may one day find itself more powerful under persecution than it ever was in the days of its glory, — if it finds for itself a head and a system.

It is easy to draw conclusions from this rapid semi-political sketch. The lack of broad views and the assemblage of small errors; the desire of making large fortunes; the want of a creed on which to support political action; a thirst for mere pleasure, which lowered the religious tone and necessitated hypocrisy; the

partial opposition of certain nobler spirits, who judged clearly and were displeased by the jealousies of the Court; the nobility of the provinces, often purer of race than the court nobles, and who, if slighted, became disaffected, — all these causes combined to give the Faubourg Saint-Germain discordant elements within itself. It was neither compact in system nor consistent in its acts; neither truly moral nor honestly licentious; neither corrupt nor corrupting. It did not wholly give up the questions that worked to its injury, neither would it adopt ideas which might have saved it. Besides, however weak its personality may have been, the party as a whole was undoubtedly armed with certain principles which are the life of nations. Therefore it is proper to ask how it came to perish in its vigor.

It was exacting in its selection of those whom it received; it had good taste and much elegant superciliousness, — and yet its fall had nothing brilliant or chivalric about it. Round the emigration of '89 clustered strong sentiments; round the domestic emigration of 1830 were self-interests. Yet the achievements of a few men in literature; the triumphs of oratory, of statesmanship; Monsieur de Talleyrand in the congresses; the conquest of Algiers, and the glory of names become historic on the battlefield, — all these pointed a way for the aristocracy of France to nationalize itself, and win back the recognition of its rights, if only it would deign to take it.

In all organized being there is harmony of parts. If a man is lazy, laziness shows itself in the movements of his body. In like manner the physiognomy of a class conforms to the spirit of it, to the soul which

animates the body. Under the Restoration the woman of the Faubourg Saint-Germain displayed neither the proud hardihood which the court ladies of former days put into their transgressions, nor the humble dignity of the tardy virtues with which they expiated them and which shed about their heads a vivid lustre. She was neither very frivolous nor very grave; her passions, with a few exceptions, were hypocritical,—she made terms, as it were, with their enjoyment. A few of these families lived the *bourgeois* life of the Duchess of Orleans, whose conjugal bed was so absurdly shown to visitors of the Palais Royal; two or three kept up the habits of the Regency, and inspired a sort of disgust in women more adroit than they.

This novel species of great lady had no influence whatever on the morals of the time. She might have had much; she could for instance, in the interests of her caste, have assumed the imposing attitude of the women of the English aristocracy. But she hesitated foolishly among her old traditions, was pious on compulsion and hypocritical in all things, concealing even her good qualities. None of these Frenchwomen could create a *salon* where the great world might learn and practise lessons of good taste and elegance. Their voices, once so potent in literature,—that living expression of all societies,—were now absolutely without sound.

When a literature has no system it has no body, and disappears with its day. Wherever, in any age, there is found in the midst of a nation a body of people drawn apart from others, history nearly always finds among them some principal personage who illustrates

the virtues and the defects of the society to which he belongs,—such as Coligny among the Huguenots, the Coadjutor in the bosom of the Fronde, Richelieu under Louis XV., Danton in the Terror. This identity between a man and his historical surroundings belongs to the nature of things. To lead parties, must we not be in harmony with their ideas? To shine in an epoch, must we not fully reflect it? From this constant obligation upon the prudent and sagacious leaders of a State to consider the follies and prejudices of the masses, come the acts for which some historians blame statesmen, when, far removed themselves from terrible popular convulsions, they judge in cold blood the passions which are necessary to control great secular struggles.

That which is true of the historical comedy of the ages is also true in the narrower sphere of those scenes of a national drama which are called its morals.

## V.

At the beginning of the ephemeral life of the Faubourg Saint-Germain under the Restoration, to which, if the foregoing remarks are true, it proved unable to give stability, a young woman was for a time a complete type of the nature, at once superior and feeble, grand and yet puerile, of her caste. She was a woman artificially educated, but really ignorant; full of noble sentiments, yet lacking thought to bring them into order; spending the rich treasures of her soul on conventionalities, though not unwilling to brave society; hesitating, nevertheless, and dropping into artifice as the natural consequence of her scruples; with more waywardness than character, more tastes than enthusiasm, more head than heart; eminently a woman and essentially a coquette; Parisian to the core; loving the brilliancy of the world and its amusements; reflecting not at all, or reflecting too late; of a natural imprudence, which rose at times almost to poetic heights; deliciously insolent, yet humble in the depths of her heart; asserting strength like a reed erect, but, like the reed, ready to bend beneath a firm hand; talking much of religion, not loving it, and yet prepared to accept it as a possible finality. How shall I portray a creature so many-sided? Capable of heroism, yet forgetting to be heroic for the sake of uttering some witty malice; young and sweet; not old in heart, but

aged by the maxims of the world about her, — understanding its selfish philosophy, but never applying it; with the vices of a courtier and the nobility of fresh womanhood; distrusting all things, yet yielding herself up at moments to the fulness of faith.

Must not the portrait of this woman, whose ever-changing tints confused each other, yet with poetic confusion, for a divine light blended them, remain forever unachieved? Her grace was the harmony of her being. Nothing in her was feigned. These passions, these half-passions, this caprice of grandeur, this reality of pettiness, these cold feelings and warm impulses, were natural to her, and came as much from her personal position as from that of the aristocracy to which she belonged. She knew she was solitary in life, and she held herself proudly above the world, in the shelter of her great name. Medea's *I* was in her soul, as it was in that of her caste, which was dying because unwilling to rouse itself or seek a physician of the body-politic, to hold or to be held to anything, so profoundly did it feel itself dead and turning into dust.

The Duchesse de Langeais, such was her name, had been married about four years at the time of the Restoration; that is to say, in 1816, when Louis XVIII., enlightened by the revolution of the Hundred Days, comprehended his situation and his century in spite of advisers, who nevertheless got the better of this Louis XI. without an axe, so soon as he was struck down by disease. The Duchesse de Langeais was a Navarreins, — a ducal family, which from the time of Louis XIV. had followed the practice of never abdicating its own name and titles in its marriages. The daughters

of the house as well as their mother had the right to a *tabouret* at Court. At the age of eighteen, Antoinette de Navarreins came from the deep seclusion in which she had been brought up, to marry the eldest son of the Duc de Langeais. These families were then living isolated from the world; but the invasion of France now promised to the royalists the return of the Bourbons as the only possible conclusion of the war.

The dukes of Navarreins and Langeais, faithful to the Bourbons, had nobly resisted the seduction of imperial distinctions, and the circumstances in which they were placed before this marriage obliged them to keep up the ancient policy of their families. Mademoiselle Antoinette de Navarreins, beautiful and poor, was therefore married to the Marquis de Langeais, whose father the duke died a few months after the marriage. On the return of the Bourbons the two families reassumed their rank, their functions, and their court dignities; once more taking part in society, from which they had long withheld themselves. They now stood at the summit of the restored political and social world. In that day of base and false conversions, the public conscience recognized with satisfaction the spotless fidelity of these families and the harmony of their private acts with their political probity, to which all parties rendered involuntary homage. But by a misfortune not uncommon in times of compromise, noble natures, whose elevated views and sound principles might have taught France the generosity of a new and bold policy, were pushed aside from the affairs of the nation, which fell into the hands of those who were interested in carrying principles to an extreme as a pledge of their new-born devotion.

The families De Langeais and De Navarreins were therefore retained in the highest sphere of court life, and condemned to bear the duties of its etiquette as well as the reproaches and ridicule of liberalism, by which they were accused of gorging themselves with honors and wealth, while in point of fact their patrimonies had not increased, and their receipts from the civil list were consumed by the mere costs of appearance, — a necessity for all European monarchies, even those which are republican.

In 1818 the Duc de Langeais commanded a military division in the provinces, and the duchess had a place at Court in the suite of one of the princesses, which enabled her to live in Paris far from her husband without scandal. The duke had, in addition to his command, some court function which sometimes required his presence; on which occasions he left the division in charge of a general of brigade. The duke and the duchess lived absolutely separated from one another, both in fact and in feeling. This marriage of mere convention had resulted as such family compacts usually do. Two characters most uncongenial had suddenly been brought together; they displeased and wounded each other, and separated forever, — each following the bent of their own nature and the habits of their world. The Duc de Langeais, as great a martinet as the Chevalier Folard (famous as a writer on military tactics), gave himself up methodically to his tastes and his pleasures, and left his wife absolutely free to follow hers. He perceived in her nature a proud spirit, a cold heart, a deep submission to the customs of the world, and a youthful honor which was likely to remain unsullied

under the eyes of their grandparents and in the atmosphere of a court at once pious and prudish. He played deliberately and in cold blood the part of a *seigneur* of the preceding century, and abandoned a young woman of twenty-two whom he had deeply offended, and who had in her character the alarming quality of never pardoning an offence if her vanity as a woman, or her pride, or her virtues, had been misunderstood and secretly wounded. When an outrage is made public a woman prefers to forget it; it gives her opportunities for generous action. She is a woman in her forgiveness; but women will not forgive secret wrongs, because they like nothing that is hidden, — neither virtue, nor love, nor concealed cowardice.

Such was the position, unknown to the world, in which the Duchesse de Langeais found herself, and on which she wasted no reflections, when the fêtes in honor of the marriage of the Duc de Berri took place. On this occasion the Court and the Faubourg Saint-Germain came out of their apathy and reserve; and from that event dates the unheard-of splendor which the Government of the Restoration wantonly displayed. At this period the Duchesse de Langeais, from policy or from vanity, never appeared in the world unless surrounded by a bevy of three or four women distinguished by name as well as by position. Queen of society, she had her ladies-in-waiting, who reproduced in other *salons* her manners and her wit. She had cleverly chosen them from among those who were not closely allied either to the Court or the Faubourg, but who aspired to both positions, and who sought to rise into the atmosphere of royalty, and breathe the seraphic air

of that high sphere called in those days "le petit château."

In such a position the Duchesse de Langeais was strong, well-supported, and in perfect security. Her ladies defended her against calumny, and helped her to play the contemptible part of a woman of fashion. She could laugh at men and passions at her ease; excite them, gather in the homage which nourishes female nature, and yet remain mistress of herself. In the great world of Paris, women are always true to the nature of woman; they live by incense, flattery, and praise. Beauty the most perfect, grace the most adorable, what are they worth if not admired? Lovers and the sycophancy of adulation are the vouchers of their power. What is power if unnoticed? Nothing. The prettiest woman in the world alone in the corner of a *salon* is unhappy. When such a woman is at the centre of social magnificence she craves to reign in all hearts, — sometimes, because she cannot be the happy sovereign of one. At this period of our history her *toilettes*, her charms, her coquetries were lavished on beings as paltry as were ever found in any society, — fops without mind, men whose sole merit was a handsome face, for whom women compromised themselves without equivalent; gilded idols of wood, who with a few exceptions had neither the antecedents of the coxcombs in the days of the Fronde, nor the solid weight of the heroes of the Empire, nor the wit and manners of their grandfathers, but who assumed, nevertheless, to possess these advantages gratis. They were brave, as all young Frenchmen are; they had ability no doubt, if put to the proof, but they were helpless during the lifetime of

old men who held them as it were in a leash. It was a cold, petty, and unpoetical epoch; and proves perhaps that a Restoration needs time to become a Monarchy.

For eighteen months the Duchesse de Langeais had led this empty life, filled exclusively with balls and amusements, triumphs without an object, and ephemeral passions born and dead of a night. When she entered a room all eyes turned upon her; she gleaned flatteries passionately expressed, and encouraged them with a gesture or a glance, but they never penetrated beneath her fair exterior. Her tone, her manners, everything about her marked authority. She lived a feverish life of vanity and perpetual amusement which made her giddy; and at times she went far in conversation, listened to everything, and depraved, so to speak, the surface of her mind. When alone, she often blushed over the recollection of things at which she had laughed in public, — scandalous stories, whose details had helped her to discuss theories of love of which she knew nothing, and the subtle distinctions of modern passion which complying hypocrites of her own sex expounded to her; for women, able to say everything to each other, lose among themselves more purity than men take from them.

There came a time when she saw that the woman beloved was the only being whose beauty and whose mind were really recognized. What was a husband? He merely proved that a young girl was well brought up or well portioned, had a clever mother, or that she satisfied a man's ambition. But a lover was a perpetual programme of her personal perfections. Madame de Langeais learned, young as she was, that a woman

could allow herself to love ostensibly, without sharing in love, without sanctioning it, without gratifying it except by the most meagre pittance of return; and more than one hypocritical prude taught her the method of playing these dangerous comedies.

The duchess therefore had her court where the number of those who adored her and courted her was the guarantee of her virtue. One evening she was at the house of an intimate friend, the Viscomtesse de Fontanges, — a humble rival who hated her sincerely and accompanied her everywhere, and with whom she maintained a species of armed friendship in which both were distrustful and their confidences discreet, not to say deceitful. After distributing a few patronizing recognitions with the air of a woman who knows the value of her smiles, her eyes chanced to fall upon a man wholly unknown to her, whose grave and noble countenance took her completely by surprise. She felt as she looked at him an emotion that resembled fear.

"My dear," she said to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who was standing near her; "who is that newcomer?"

"A man whom you must have heard of, — the Marquis de Montriveau."

"Ah, is it he?" She raised her eyeglass and examined him coolly, as she might have looked at a portrait which receives all glances and can return none. "Present him to me," she said; "he must be amusing."

"The most tiresome and gloomy man in the world, my dear; but he is all the fashion."

## VI.

Monsieur Armand de Montriveau was at this time, though unaware of it, an object of great fashionable curiosity; and he deserved it far more than the passing idols with which Paris is enamored for a few days, merely to satisfy the passion of infatuation and false enthusiasm with which it is periodically afflicted.

Armand de Montriveau was the only son of General de Montriveau, one of the *ci devant* nobles before the Revolution, who nobly served the Republic and perished, — killed by the side of Joubert, at Novi. The orphan was placed by order of Bonaparte in the military school at Châlons, and taken, with sons of other generals killed in battle, under the protection of the French republic. On leaving Châlons without fortune, he entered the artillery, and was in command of only a battalion when the disaster at Fontainebleau occurred. The arm to which he belonged offered few chances of promotion. In the first place the number of its officers is more limited than in any other branch of the service; next, the liberal, almost republican, opinions which the artillery professed, and the fears thus inspired in the Emperor's mind by a body of instructed men accustomed to reflection, went far to hinder the military fortunes of the best of them. Contrary, therefore, to the usual rule, officers advanced to the generalship of this arm were not always the most distinguished members

of it, for the reason that in the eyes of the Emperor mediocrity was a safeguard. The artillery was a corps apart to some extent from the army itself, and belonged to Napoleon only on the field of battle.

To these general causes, which partly explain the checks which Armand de Montriveau had encountered in his military career, were joined others inherent in his person and character. Alone in the world; thrown at the age of twenty into the midst of that tempestuous crowd of men who surrounded Napoleon; having no interests outside of himself; prepared to meet death day by day, — he came to live within his own mind by an honorable self-esteem and the consciousness of duty fulfilled. He was habitually silent, like other timid men; timid, not from lack of courage, but from a sort of shyness and modesty which kept him from all demonstration of himself. His intrepidity on the battle-field was never mere bluster: his eye was everywhere; he could tranquilly give orders and advice to his comrades, or advance himself into the midst of bullets, — bending, however, at the right moment to avoid them. His nature was kind, but his countenance made him seem haughty and severe. With principles that were mathematically stern, he admitted no hypocritical compromises with the duties of his position, nor with the consequences of his acts. He lent himself to nothing of which he could feel ashamed, and asked nothing for himself. He was, in truth, one of the world's great men unrecognized, — men who are philosophical enough to despise mere glory, and who live without attachment to life for the reason that they do not find a way to develop their powers of mind and heart to their full extent. He was feared,

held in high esteem, and little loved. Men will permit us to rise above them, but they will not forgive him who refuses to descend as low as they. Thus the feelings they bestow on noble characters are never without the elements of hatred and fear. To be worthy of high honor is for them a tacit censure, which they forgive neither to the living nor to the dead.

After the parting at Fontainebleau, Montriveau, though noble and titled, was placed on half-pay. His old-fashioned integrity alarmed the war department, where his faithfulness to his oath taken to the imperial eagle was well understood. During the Hundred Days he was appointed colonel of the Guard, and was wounded at Waterloo. His wounds having detained him in Belgium, he was not with the army of the Loire. Nevertheless, the royal government would not recognize a rank bestowed during those Days, and Armand de Montriveau, thus put aside, quitted France. Led by a spirit of enterprise and a nobility of mind which up to this time the chances of war had satisfied, prompted also by the instinctive desire of high natures for enterprises of national utility, the Marquis de Montriveau embarked on a journey to explore Upper Egypt and the unknown parts of Africa, more especially the central countries which in our day excite the interest of men of science. The expedition was long and disastrous. He gathered precious notes, which would have given long-sought solutions to many geographical and industrial problems. He had reached, not without surmounting obstacles, the very heart of Africa, when he fell by treachery into the power of a savage tribe. He was stripped of everything, held in slavery, and

dragged for two years across deserts, threatened with death at every moment, and worse treated than an animal in the hands of pitiless children. His bodily strength and the steadfast courage of his nature enabled him to bear the horrors of his captivity; and he bent the full force of his energy to a plan of escape, which succeeded miraculously. He reached the French settlement on the Senegal half dead, in rags, and with nothing left of his enterprise but the recollections preserved in his own mind. The immense toils of the journey, his studies of African dialects, his discoveries and scientific observations were all lost. A single fact will serve to illustrate his sufferings. For several days the children of the sheik of the tribe which held him in bondage amused themselves by a game of throwing the bones of horses at his head and making them stick there.

Montriveau returned to Paris in the summer of 1818 ruined in prospects, without patrons and seeking none. He would have died twenty times rather than solicit a favor, no matter what it might be, not even the recognition of his own rights. Adversity and suffering had developed his native energy even in small things; and the habit of maintaining his dignity as a man in presence of that moral being which we call conscience, gave importance in his mind to acts apparently insignificant. Nevertheless, his reports to the scientific men of Paris and to a few military men of attainments made known to a certain extent his merits and his adventures.

The particulars of his travels, more especially those of his captivity and escape, revealed such wisdom and

courage that he acquired without being aware of it the fleeting celebrity of which the *salons* of Paris are prodigal, and which is only perpetuated at the price of unheard-of efforts. Towards the end of the year his position suddenly changed. From poor he became rich, or at least he had the external advantages of wealth. The royal government, which now felt the need of attracting men who would give real strength to the army, began to make concessions to those old officers whose known character and loyalty offered guarantees of fidelity. Monsieur de Montriveau was replaced on his rank in the Royal Guard, and favors were successively shown to him without solicitation of his own; for friends spared him all personal efforts, which he assuredly would never have made for himself.

Contrary to his habits, which in this respect suddenly changed, he went into society, where he was favorably received, and where he met on all sides evidences of esteem. He seemed to have reached some crisis in his life; but in him all took place within his own breast, and he confided nothing to the world without. He bore in society a grave and reserved manner, and was coldly silent. Yet in spite of this he had much social success; precisely because his presence cut sharply across the monotony of the conventional faces which at that epoch furnished the *salons* of Paris, where, indeed, his own was singularly unique. His speech had the conciseness that belongs to the language of solitary men and savages. His shyness was taken for pride, and pleased accordingly. He was both strange and grand, and women were all the more taken with him because he escaped from their adroit flatteries and the manœuvres

by which they circumvent men, — even men with force of character, — and worm their way into the feelings of the most inflexible. Monsieur de Montriveau did not in the least understand their little Parisian tricks; his nature could respond only to the sonorous vibrations of real feeling, and society might soon have left him to himself if friends had not sung his praises, and if the woman who was destined to occupy his thoughts had not desired the triumph of her self-love.

Thus the curiosity of the Duchesse de Langeais was as lively as it was natural. By a mere chance this man had interested her the night before, for some one had related to her a scene in Monsieur de Montriveau's journey which was fit to impress the lively imagination of a woman. In an expedition towards the sources of the Nile, Monsieur de Montriveau had a struggle with one of his guides as remarkable as any that can be found in the annals of travel. There was a desert which he was compelled to cross on foot in order to reach a point that he was anxious to explore. Only one man was able to guide him. Up to that time no traveller had penetrated to this region, where the intrepid officer believed he should find the solution of several scientific problems. In spite of remonstrances from the old men of the country and from the man who offered to guide him, he persisted in undertaking the terrible journey.

Armed with all his courage, — roused, we may add, by the assurance of great difficulties to overcome, — he started early one morning. After marching through the desert for a whole day he slept at night upon the sand, enduring unexpected fatigue from the shifting of his bed, which seemed to slip away from him at every

turn. He knew that on the morrow he must start at daybreak, and the guide had assured him that by the middle of the day he should reach his goal. This assurance gave him courage and invigorated his strength, and in spite of his sufferings he continued his way, cursing science in his heart, but ashamed to complain openly before his guide. He had marched for more than a third of the day when his strength gave out, and his feet became blistered and bleeding. Turning to the guide, he asked if they should soon arrive.

"In one hour," said the Arab.

Armand roused his strength for one hour more, and went on. The hour went by, and still nothing was seen on the horizon of sand, vast as the ocean, of the palm-trees and the wooded hills, the sight of whose tops would have foretold the end of his journey. He stopped and refused to go farther; he threatened the guide, called him a murderer, and accused him of wilful deception. Tears of rage and horrible fatigue ran down his scorched cheeks; he was bent double with the sufferings of the march, and his throat seemed closing with the thirst of the desert. The guide, unmoved, listened to his reproaches with an ironical air, seeming to study with the indifference of an Oriental the texture of the sand, now almost black in its reflections like burnished gold.

"I was deceived," he said coldly. "It is long since I came this way, and I can hardly find the track. We are on it, but we still have two hours march before us."

"The man is doubtless right," thought Montriveau, and he went on with difficulty, following the pitiless Arab, to whom he seemed bound by cords as a condemned man is bound to his executioner.

The two hours passed; the Frenchman had spent his last energy, and still the horizon lay straight, its line unbroken by palms or mountains. He had no strength left for cries or murmurs, and he lay down on the sand to die; but his glance might have terrified even an intrepid man: it seemed to tell his guide that he would not die alone. The Arab looked at him like a demon, with a calm eye full of power, and left him where he lay, moving to a short distance out of range of his victim's despair. Presently Montriveau recovered strength to utter a last curse. The man came to him, looked at him fixedly, motioned him to silence, and said: —

"Did you not insist against our advice on going to the place to which I am now guiding you? You reproach me with deceiving you. If I had not deceived you, you could not have come as far as this. You ask the truth: here it is. We have five hours' march before us: we cannot now turn back upon our steps. Sound your heart; if your courage fails, here is my poniard."

Struck by this union of human will and endurance, Monsieur de Montriveau would not fall below the standard of a barbarian: drawing from his European pride a fresh draught of courage, he went on. The five hours passed by; and still nothing was seen. Montriveau turned a dying eye upon his guide; but at the same moment the Arab lifted him on his shoulders and showed him almost at their feet a lake embosomed in verdure, and a forest lit up by the rays of the setting sun. They were within a short distance of a granite ledge, beneath which an earthly paradise lay, as it were, buried. Armand felt born again; and his guide, that

giant of intelligence and courage, ended his labor of devotion by carrying the intrepid explorer across the burning and polished granite; from which he could see on the one hand the hell of the torturing sand, and on the other the loveliest oasis of the desert.

Madame de Langeais, already struck with the aspect of this poetic personage, was still more interested when she learned that he was the Marquis de Montriveau, of whom she had dreamed the night before. To have followed him across the burning desert, to have had him as the companion of her dreams,—what could offer to such a woman a greater prospect of amusement?

No man ever more distinctly expressed his character in his person than Armand de Montriveau, or challenged more inevitably the thoughts of others. His head, which was large and square, had the characteristic trait of an abundant mass of black hair, which surrounded his face in a way that recalled General Kléber, whom indeed he otherwise resembled by the vigor of his bearing, the shape of his face, the tranquil courage of his eye, and the expression of inward ardor which shone out through his strong features. He was of medium height, broad in the chest, and muscular as a lion. When he walked, his carriage, his step, his least gesture bespoke a consciousness of power which was imposing; there was something even despotic about it. He seemed aware that nothing could oppose his will; possibly because he willed only that which was right. Nevertheless he was—like all men really strong—gentle in speech, simple in manner, and naturally kind. Occasionally these finer qualities disappeared under certain

circumstances, and then the man within became implacable in his feelings, fixed in his resolves, terrible in his actions; and an observer would have seen at the closing line of his lips a curve which betrayed his disposition to irony.

## VII.

The Duchesse de Langeais, knowing the passing value of such a conquest, resolved, during the few moments that Madame de Maufrigneuse took to bring him up for presentation, to make this man one of her lovers and give him precedence over all the rest; to attach him to her suite, and charm him with all her coquetries. It was a caprice, — the pure whim of a duchess, such as Calderon or Lope de la Vega might have pictured. She resolved that this man should belong to no other woman, but she never for a moment dreamed of belonging to him.

Madame de Langeais had by nature the gift of charm, and her education had perfected it. Women envied her, and men loved her. Nothing was lacking in her to inspire love; neither that which justified it, nor that which perpetuated it. Her style of beauty and her manners, her ways of speaking and her attitudes, all combined to give her the grace of natural attraction, which seemed in her to be the conscience of her power. Her figure was well made, and had an easy movement and change of attitude, — which was, indeed, her only affectation. Everything about her was in harmony, from the least little gesture to the special turn of her phrases and the charming hypocrisy with which she bestowed her smiles. The predominant character of her countenance was a gracious and elegant nobleness,

which was not lessened by the mobility, altogether French, of her movements. These ever-changing attitudes had an infinite charm for men. Indeed, the germs of all the joys of love were in the freedom of her expressive glance, in the caressing tones of her voice, and the quiet grace of her language. Whoever passed an evening beside her found her flitting from grave to gay, yet with no pretended gayety or gravity. She could be, at will, courteous, contemptuous, sarcastic, or confiding. She seemed kind, and really was so; for in her position she was seldom tempted to be unamiable. There were days when she showed herself by turns trustful and distrustful, tender to emotion, then hard and chilling to the heart. But to paint her, must I not gather together every feminine antithesis? In a word, she was everything she wished to be or to seem. Her face, which was perhaps a trifle too long, had an infinite grace; something spiritual and slender about it recalled the faces of the Middle Ages, and the skin was pale with delicate rose-tints: indeed, if she had a fault, it came through excess of delicacy.

Monsieur de Montriveau allowed himself very willingly to be presented to the Duchesse de Langeais, and she, with the exquisite tact that avoids commonplace, received him without questions or compliments, but with a certain respectful grace meant to flatter a superior man; for superiority in a man implies the tact that can penetrate the real sentiments of a woman. If she showed curiosity, it was only by her glance; if she flattered, it was only by her manner; and she played the pretty tricks of speech with a delicate desire to please which no one knew better how to show. But

the whole conversation was, in reality, only the body of the letter; there was to be a postscript, where the real thought was uttered. When therefore at the end of half an hour's chat, in which tones and smiles alone had any value, Monsieur de Montriveau prepared discreetly to withdraw, the duchess retained him by a gesture.

"Monsieur," she said, "I hardly know if the few moments in which I have had the pleasure of conversing with you have offered you sufficient attraction to justify me in asking you to come and see me at home. I am afraid there is much egotism in my desire to draw you there; but if I have been so happy as to make the prospect agreeable to you, you will always find me in the evening until ten o'clock."

These words were said in so caressing a tone that Monsieur de Montriveau could do no less than accept the invitation. When he fell back into the group of men who stood at some distance from the women, several of his friends congratulated him — half in jest, half in earnest — on the unusual welcome the duchess had accorded him. The difficult and illustrious conquest they declared was undoubtedly made, and the glory thereof had fallen to the artillery of the Guard. It is easy to guess the good and evil jests which the topic, once launched, suggested to that idle world of Paris which loves to amuse itself, and whose amusements are so ephemeral that each individual hastens to pluck the flower while it blooms.

This nonsense flattered the general unconsciously. From the place where he stationed himself his eyes were drawn to the duchess by many confused impulses.

He could not help admitting to himself that of all the women whose beauty had caught his eye none had ever shone for him with such delightful mingling of virtues and defects, — a harmony which the youth of France most desires in a mistress. Is there a man, no matter in what rank his fate has placed him, who has not felt the indefinable joy of finding in the woman he chooses for his own, — though his choice be but a dream, — the triple moral, physical, and social perfection which allows him to see in her the accomplishment of his every wish? If it is not the cause of love, this delightful union of qualities is assuredly the finest medium of all feeling. "Without vanity," said a great moralist of the last century, "love is convalescence." There is undoubtedly for a man, even more than for a woman, a treasure-house of delight in the superiority of the being beloved. Is it not much, perhaps all, to feel that our self-love can never be wounded through her deficiencies; that she is too noble to be cut by the keen glances of a contemptuous eye, sufficiently wealthy to be lapped in splendors equal to those of the ephemeral sovereigns of finance, and beautiful enough to be the rival of all her sex?

Such reflections as these a man makes in the twinkling of an eye; but if the woman who inspires them offers him at the same time, for the future of his sudden passion, the changing charms of grace, the ingenuousness of a virgin soul, the thousand folds and lines of coquettish allurement, and all the perils of love, will not the coldest heart of man be stirred? Monsieur de Montriveau's peculiar relation to woman could have been rendered possible only by the circumstances of his past

life. Thrown young into the tempest of the French wars, having always lived on fields of battle, he knew women only as a hurried traveller passing from inn to inn knows of the countries through which he travels. Perhaps he might have said of his life as Voltaire at the age of eighty said of his; and had he not thirty-seven follies with which to reproach himself? He was, at his age, as new to love as the young man who reads Faublas in secret. Of woman he knew all, but of love he knew nothing; and this virginity of spirit gave birth to desires which had the freshness of youth. Some men withheld by labors to which they are condemned either by poverty or ambition, as Montriveau had been restrained by the fortunes of war and the events of his subsequent life, have known the same situation, though they seldom avow it. In Paris every man is supposed to have loved; indeed, no woman desires him for whom no other women have sighed. From the fear of being thought a fool in this respect come the foppish lies so often told in Paris, where to be a fool means to be an alien in that accomplished world.

Monsieur de Montriveau was in the clutches of a passionate desire, deepened by his long loneliness in the desert; and his heart swelled with an emotion of which until now he had never felt the strain. But, firm as he was passionate, he controlled his feelings, although while talking with apparent indifference to his friends he withdrew into his own mind, and swore to himself that he would win that woman. The desire became an oath after the manner of the Arabs, among whom he had lived, and to whom an oath is a contract made between destiny and their souls, which they stake on the success of the enterprise consecrated by their oath, — counting death itself as one chance the more of success

A young man would have said, "I should like to win the Duchesse de Langeais," or, "The man the Duchesse de Langeais loves will be a happy fellow;" but Montriveau said, "I shall win Madame de Langeais." When a man, virgin in heart and for whom love is a religion, admits such a thought, he does not know the hell into which he sets his foot.

The general left the *salon* abruptly, and went home quivering with the pulsings of his first fever of love. If towards middle age a man retains his beliefs and his illusions, and the sincerity and impetuosity of youth, his first movement is to put forth his hand and seize the object of his desire. But when he has measured the distance which separates him from it, a distance nearly impossible to cross, he falls, like the children, into a sort of impatient wonder, which gives new value to the thing desired. Therefore on the morrow, after stormy reflections which ploughed up his mind, Armand de Montriveau knew himself to be under the dominion of a true love. The woman he had cavalierly declared should be his the night before had now become to him a sacred and imposing power: she was destined thenceforth to be to him the whole of life and the world. The mere recollection of the emotion she had caused him thrilled him more than the keenest joys or pains of his past life. Revolutions trouble only the interests of mankind, but one passion can uproot every other feeling in the heart of a man. For those who live by feelings rather than by interests, who have more heart and blood than mind and lymph, a true love will change the whole course of existence. With one thought, at one stroke, Armand de Montriveau effaced his past life.

After asking himself twenty times, like a child, "Shall I go? — shall I not go?" he dressed and went to the Hôtel de Langeais about eight in the evening, and was admitted to the presence of the woman — no, not the woman, the idol he had seen the night before under the blaze of lights, fresh and pure as a young girl, dressed in gauzy veils and laces. He entered impetuously, resolved to declare his love as he would have brought up his cannon on the battle-field. Poor neophyte! he found his nebulous sylphide swathed in a wrapper of brown cashmere of much amplitude, languidly lying upon a divan in a dark boudoir. Madame de Langeais did not rise, and only showed her head, with the hair somewhat in disorder and covered by a veil. With a hand which in the faint light of one wax candle placed at a distance seemed to the eyes of Montriveau white as marble, the duchess made him a sign to be seated, and said in a voice as faint as the light, —

"If it were any one but you, Monsieur le marquis, — if it had been a friend with whom I could take a liberty, or some one in whom I feel no interest, I should have sent him away. You find me suffering terribly."

Armand said to himself: "I must go."

"But," she added, with a glance which the ingenuous soldier attributed to fever, "I hardly know if it can be from a presentiment of your visit, — for the promptness of which I must truly thank you, — but for the last few moments my head feels better."

"I may remain?" asked Armand.

"Ah, I should be sorry indeed to have you go. I said to myself this morning that I could scarcely have made any impression upon you; that you had doubt-

less taken my invitation for one of those meaningless phrases for which Parisian women are celebrated. Therefore I pardoned, by anticipation, your absence. A man who comes from the desert is not expected to know how exclusive our faubourg is in its friendships."

These gracious words, half murmured, fell from her lips slowly, as if each were freighted with the pleased feeling that appeared to dictate them. The duchess, bent on making the most of her headache, succeeded admirably. The poor soldier suffered really from the pretended suffering of his divinity. Ah, how could he speak to her now of his love? Armand began to perceive that it would be folly indeed to fling it in the face of such a being as this. He caught up, as it were by one thought, all the niceties of feeling and the exigencies of a delicate soul. To love? — was it not to plead, to crave, to wait? If he felt this love, must he not prove it? Thus he found himself silenced, chilled, by the proprieties of the noble faubourg, by the majestic weakness of this headache, and, more than all, by the timidity of a genuine love. But no power on earth could have quenched the glance of his eyes, which blazed with the fire of his love and of the desert, — eyes which burned stilly like those of a panther, and over which the lids rarely fell. She liked these fixed looks, which bathed her in light and love.

"Madame la duchesse," he answered, "I fear that I shall ill express my gratitude for your goodness. At this moment I have but one thought, — the wish to relieve your sufferings."

"Permit me to get rid of this thing, it is too warm," she said, throwing off by a movement full of grace the

covering that had lain upon her feet, which were now disclosed to view.

"Madame, in Asia your feet would be valued at ten thousand sequins."

"A traveller's flattery!" she said, smiling.

This bright and clever creature now took delight in drawing the grave Montriveau through a conversation full of trifling and commonplace nonsense, where he manœuvred, in military parlance, like Prince Charles when pitted against the genius of Napoleon. She amused herself maliciously by reconnoitring the lines of the new passion, shown by the number of silly remarks which she wrested from her neophyte, as she led him step by step into a labyrinth where she intended to leave him very much ashamed of himself. She began the advance therefore by laughing at him, — all the while trying to make him forget the time. The length of a first visit is often a flattery; but as to this, Armand was not her accomplice. The great traveller had been only an hour in the boudoir, talking of everything and saying nothing, aware that he was an instrument in the hands of this woman who was playing upon him, when she suddenly sat up, slipped the veil from her head to her throat, did him the honor of a complete recovery, and rang for lights. To the absolute inaction in which she had been lying succeeded movements full of grace.

She turned to Monsieur de Montriveau and said, in reply to a confidence she had just maliciously wrung from him and which appeared to interest her much: "You are laughing at me when you try to make me think that you have never loved. That is a favorite

pretence of men. We believe it? Ah, pure civility! Do you think we cannot judge you for ourselves? Where is the man who never in his life has found occasion to be in love? But you all delight in deceiving us; and we let you do it — silly fools that we are! — because your deceptions are an homage paid to the superiority of our sentiments, which are always pure."

The last sentence was uttered in a tone of pride and distant dignity, which converted the hapless novice of love into a ball flung down through an abyss, and the duchess into an angel floating upward to her own particular sphere.

"The devil!" cried Armand de Montriveau, within his soul, "how shall I ever tell this beautiful, far-off being that I love her?"

He had already told her so twenty times, or rather the duchess had twenty times read it in his eyes, and perceived in this genuine passion of a truly great man a keen amusement for herself and an interest in a life hitherto devoid of interests. She therefore made ready to throw up a succession of redoubts, which he should be forced to carry before he was permitted to approach the citadel of her heart. Plaything of her caprices, Montriveau was to be kept stationary, all the while surmounting obstacle after obstacle, — as an insect is tormented by children who make it jump from finger to finger thinking it is getting away, while its mischievous little captors keep it to the same place.

For all this, the duchess felt in her heart with joy that this man of worth and character had spoken the truth. It was true that Monsieur de Montriveau had never loved. He prepared to take his leave

discontented with himself, still more discontented with her; and she saw with delight an ill-humor which she could dissipate with a word, a look, or a gesture.

"Will you come to-morrow evening?" she said. "I am going to a ball, and I shall expect you up to ten o'clock."

## VIII

The next day was spent by Montriveau chiefly in gazing out of the window of his study, and in consuming an indefinite number of cigars. In no other way did he seem able to kill the time until he could dress and go to the Hôtel de Langeais. To those who knew the noble worth of this man, it would have been pitiful to see him thus belittled, thus agitated, and to feel that a mind whose qualities had done work for the world was now contracted to the limits of a lady's boudoir. But he felt his happiness so involved, that to save his life he would not have confided his love even to a friend. Is there not always some sense of shame in the modesty which takes possession of a man when he loves; and does not this shame form a part of the woman's triumph; and is it not among the many reasons never explained to themselves which lead women to be the first, usually, to betray the secrets of their love, — when the secresy, we may add, has become a burden to them?

"Monsieur," said the footman, "Madame la duchesse is not yet visible. She is dressing, and begs you to wait for her."

Armand walked about the room charmed with the taste displayed in all its details. He admired Madame de Langeais in admiring the things which were hers, and which betrayed her habits, even before he saw

their real merits. After making him wait an hour, the duchess came from her bedroom softly, without noise. Montriveau turned, and quivered as he saw her gliding forward like a shadow. She came to him without saying, as a woman of less breeding might have done, "Do you like my dress?" She was sure of that; but her glance said, "I have dressed to please you."

The fairy godmother of some hidden princess could alone have wound about the throat of this charming creature the cloud of gauze whose folds held tints that threw into relief the lustre of her transparent skin. The duchess was dazzling. The delicate blue of her gown, whose garlands were the same as the flowers in her hair, gave substance by its color to the fragile figure which seemed to be aërial in its motion; for Madame de Langeais, gliding rapidly towards Armand, let the ends of her scarf float behind her, so that our gallant soldier compared her in his thoughts to those beautiful blue insects which hover above the waters and among the flowers, with whose azure tints they blend and disappear.

"I have made you wait," she said, in the voice women take towards men whom they wish to please.

"I would have waited an eternity to find so lovely a divinity. But it is no compliment to speak to you of your beauty; you can accept nothing less than adoration. Will you suffer me to kiss your scarf?"

"Ah, no!" she said with a proud gesture, "I esteem you enough to offer you my hand," and she held it out to him still moist and perfumed.

The hand of a woman at the moment when she comes from her bath retains I know not what of dewy

freshness and softened texture, which sends a delicious tingling from the lips to the soul.

"Will you always give it to me thus?" said the general, humbly kissing that dangerous hand.

"Yes; but we will go no farther," she said smiling.

She sat down, and seemed to find difficulty in putting on her gloves, and in slipping the kid along her slender fingers; looking from time to time at Monsieur de Montriveau, who was admiring alternately the duchess and the grace of her reiterated gesture.

"Ah, this is delightful!" she said. "You are so punctual! I love punctuality. His Majesty calls it the politeness of kings, but for my part I accept it as the most respectful of flatteries. Don't you think it is?"

She threw him a glance of specious friendliness when she saw that he was mute with pleasure and positively happy in such mere nothings. Ah, Madame de Langeais knew her business as a woman! She knew well how to raise a man up when his love was lowering to his pride; how to reward him by hollow flattery for every step he took downward into the follies of sentimentality.

"You will never forget to come at nine o'clock?"

"Oh, no! But do you go to a ball every night?"

"How can I tell?" she answered, shrugging her shoulders with a childish gesture that seemed to say she was all caprice, and that a lover must take her as he found her.

"Besides," she added, "it cannot signify to you; you shall take me to the ball."

"To-night," he said, "it would be difficult; for I am not suitably dressed."

"It seems to me," she observed, looking haughtily at him, "that if any one can object to your dress it is I. You should know, Monsieur *le voyageur*, that the man whose arm I accept is above fashion, and that no one will dare to criticise him. I see that you don't know the world; and I like you the better for it."

She was dragging him all the while into the puerilities of the world, and instructing him as to the vanities of a woman of fashion.

"If she chooses to commit a folly for me," said Armand to himself, "I should be a great fool to prevent her. If she does, it certainly must mean that she loves me. I know she can't despise the world more than I do; so I am ready for the ball."

The duchess was thinking that when people saw the general following her in boots and a black cravat, they would not hesitate to proclaim him passionately in love with her. Montriveau, on the other hand, delighted to believe that the queen of elegant society was willing to compromise herself for him, found his wit rising with his hopes. Conscious that he pleased, he began to express real ideas and feelings, and lost the constraint that held him down the night before. This genuine conversation, solid, animated, and filled with confidences as agreeable to hear as to utter, did it really charm Madame de Langeais, or had she planned it with delightful coquetry? Certain it is that she glanced mischievously at the clock when it struck midnight.

"Ah! you have made me lose the ball," she exclaimed with an air of surprise and vexation. Then she smiled softly to herself, as if admitting the exchange

of pleasures, in a way that caused the soldier's heart to bound.

"I had promised Madame de Beauséant," she said; "they are all expecting me."

"Well, then, go."

"No," she said, "I shall stay at home. Your adventures in the East are delightful. Tell me the whole of your life there. I love to share the sufferings of a brave man, — for I do feel them, truly." She played with her scarf, twisting it and tearing it by hasty, impatient movements, which seemed to express some inward dissatisfaction and serious thought.

"Women are worth nothing!" she exclaimed. "Ah, we are unworthy beings, selfish, frivolous! All we know is how to be bored by amusements. In the olden time women were beneficent lights: they lived to comfort those who wept, to encourage great virtues, to reward artists and inspire their work with noble thoughts. If the world has grown small, the fault is ours. You make me hate the life of balls and amusements. Ah, I have sacrificed very little to you to-night!" She ended by destroying the scarf, as a child playing with a flower tears off petal after petal; then rolling it up, disclosing her white and flexible throat, she threw it from her and rang the bell.

"I shall not go out," she said to the footman. Then she turned her long blue eyes timidly on Armand, that he might guess from the fear they seemed to express that this order was an avowal of feeling, — a first and great favor.

"You have had many griefs," she said, after a pause full of thought, and with that tenderness women often put into their voices when it is not in their hearts.

"No," answered Armand; "for until to-day I never knew happiness."

"You know it, then?" she said, looking at him from beneath her lashes with seductive hypocrisy.

"My future happiness," he replied, "must it not be in seeing you, in listening to you? Till now I have only suffered pain; henceforth I may have to endure misery."

"Ah, enough, enough!" she cried. "Now, go; it is past midnight. Respect the proprieties. I did not go to the ball, but you were there, remember. Do not let us give occasion for gossip. Adieu. I don't yet know what excuse I shall give; but a headache is a good friend that never contradicts us."

"Is there a ball to-morrow?" he asked.

"You will get accustomed to them," she said, laughing. "Well, yes; to-morrow we will go to another ball."

Armand went away the happiest man on earth, and returned every evening to Madame de Langeais at the hour when it was tacitly understood he was expected. It would be irksome, and to young people who have many such recollections superfluous, to let our story advance step by step as the poem of this intercourse flowed on, its course checked or widened at the pleasure of the duchess by a dispute of words when the sentiment went too far, or by complaint of the sentiment when words would not answer to her thought. But to mark the progress of our Penelope's web, perhaps

we ought to show what material gains the sentiment was allowed to make.

A few days after the first meeting of the duchess and Armand de Montriveau the devoted soldier had conquered, with all propriety, the right to kiss the hands of his insatiable mistress. Wherever Madame de Langeais appeared, Monsieur de Montriveau followed in attendance; so that people called him in jest "the banner of the duchess." This position soon brought him envy, jealousy, and much ill-will. The duchess had attained her object; the marquis was drawn in the train of her admirers, and she was able to humiliate those who had boasted of her good graces by publicly ranking him above them all.

"Decidedly," said Madame de Sérizy, "Monsieur de Montriveau is the man whom the duchess distinguishes."

To be distinguished by a woman means in Paris but one thing; and the stories told of the general's prowess rendered him so formidable that his younger rivals abandoned all pretensions to the duchess, and only continued to revolve in her sphere that they might make the most of the importance it gave them, or use her name and notice to advance negotiations with stars of a lesser magnitude, who were delighted to snatch adorers from Madame de Langeais. The duchess, whose perspicacity noticed all these desertions and treaties, was not their dupe; and she knew well — as Monsieur de Talleyrand, who was very fond of her, said with a smile — how to gather an aftermath of vengeance with a two-edged scoff at such morganatic espousals. Her disdainful satire contributed not a little to the awe she inspired and to her reputation for wit; and she thus strengthened

her character for virtue, all the while entertaining herself gaily by exposing the secrets of others.

Nevertheless, after two months of this comedy she began to feel in the depths of her heart a vague fear as she saw it was not in Montriveau's nature to comprehend the craft of Faubourg Saint-Germainesque coquetry, and that he took all her proceedings in deep earnest.

"My dear duchess," the old Vidame de Pamiers said to her one evening, "your friend is first cousin to the eagles. You cannot tame him; and some day, if you don't take care, he will carry you off to his eyrie."

## IX.

The day after the worldly-wise old Vidame had made her this speech, which Madame de Langeais feared was only too prophetic, she began in earnest an attempt to make Armand dislike her, and became hard, exacting, nervous, and even irritable to him, — a measure he disarmed by treating her with the utmost gentleness. She knew so little of the simple goodness of noble natures that the unselfish pleasantries with which at first he met her ill-humor touched and surprised her. She was seeking a quarrel, and found only fresh proofs of affection. Nevertheless, she persisted.

"How is it possible," said Armand, "that a man by whom you are idolized should displease you?"

"You don't displease me," she said, becoming suddenly sweet and submissive. "But why do you want to compromise me? You can only be my friend: you must know that. I should like to find in you the delicate instinct of true friendship; so that I need not be forced to lose either your regard or the pleasure I take in our intercourse."

"Your friend! only your friend!" exclaimed Monsieur de Montriveau, to whom this terrible word was like an electric shock. "I, who have rested on the faith of the sweet hours you have granted me! I, who have waked to life since I feel myself within your heart! And to-day, without motive, without reason, you take

gratuitous pleasure in killing the hope by which I live. After pledging me such constancy, after showing such horror at women who have mere caprices, do you mean to tell me that you are like all the rest, — that you have passions and no love? Why have you asked of me my life? Why have you accepted it?"

"I have done wrong, my friend. Yes, a woman does wrong when she yields to feelings she cannot, must not reward."

"Ah, I understand! You have only been a little coquettish and —"

"Coquettish! I hate coquetry. To be a coquette, Armand, is to promise oneself to a dozen men, and to give oneself to none. At least that is how I understand our ethics. But to try to please others; to be sad with the gloomy, gay with the thoughtless, crafty with the politic; to listen with feigned attention to chatterers; to fight battles with soldiers, and grow passionate for the good of the country with philanthropists; to give to each his little dose of flattery,— why, this seems to me as necessary as to wear flowers in my hair, or diamonds, or gloves, or clothes. Such things are the mental and moral part of dress, and we put them on or off with our feathers. Surely you do not call that coquetry? But I have never treated you as I have the rest of the world. With you, my friend, I am true. I have not always agreed with your ideas; but when after long discussions you have convinced me, who has been happier than I? I love you; but only as a pure and religious woman should love. I have been thinking it all over. I am married, Armand; and though the terms on which I live with Monsieur de Langeais leave me free to dispose of

my heart as I please, yet I can go no farther: the laws of marriage, and the conventions of society forbid it. In whatever rank a woman is placed, if she offends those laws she is driven from society; and I have never yet seen the man who could understand the full meaning of that sacrifice. More than all, the break which every one foresees between Madame de Beauséant and Monsieur d'Adjuda only shows me that such sacrifices are, in many instances, the reason why men abandon us. If you sincerely love me, you will cease to see me — at least for a time. For your sake I will lay aside all my vanity. Is that nothing? What does the world say of a woman to whom no man is attached? — that she has no heart, no mind, no soul, above all, no charm. Other women will give me no credit for parting with you; they would like to tear from me the qualities they envy. But why should I care for the contest of my rivals so long as my reputation is intact? — they certainly can't acquire that! My friend, give something to one who sacrifices so much for you. Come to me less often, and I will promise not to love you less."

"Ah," replied Montriveau, with the sarcasm of a wounded heart, "love, according to scribblers, is fed on illusions! Nothing more true; I see it. I am to imagine myself loved! But let me tell you there are thoughts, like wounds, from which there is no recovery. You were my last belief: I see in you that all things here below are false."

She smiled.

"Yes," continued Montriveau in an altered voice, "your Catholic faith to which you have tried to convert me is a lie that men make to themselves. What is

hope but a lie? Pity, virtue, fear, are lying calculations. My happiness is to be a lie, is it? I am to cheat myself, and consent forever to give my gold for silver? If you can so easily dispense with my presence, if you will acknowledge me neither for your friend nor your lover, you do not love me; and I, poor fool! can say that, and know that, and yet — I love you!"

"But, my poor Armand, you are angry."

"Angry? I!"

"Yes, you think everything is at an end because I ask you to be a little prudent."

In her heart she was enchanted with the anger that flashed in his eyes. At this moment she was tormenting him, but at the same time she judged him, and observed every change in his countenance. Had the general been so unlucky as to be generous without discussion, which might easily have happened to so candid a mind, he would have been banished forever, impeached and convicted of not knowing how to love. The greater part of womankind like to feel their moral convictions violated: is it not one of their flatteries to yield only to superior force? But Armand was not wise enough to perceive the net the duchess had spread for him: strong souls that love are children still!

"If you only wish to keep up appearances," he said, artlessly, "I —"

"Keep up appearances!" she cried, interrupting him. "What an idea you have of me! Have I given you the smallest reason to think I could ever be yours?"

"Good heavens! then what are we talking about?" demanded Montriveau.

"Monsieur, you really alarm me. No, pardon me. I thank you, Armand," she continued in a freezing tone, — "I thank you for showing me in time my imprudence; believe me, an involuntary imprudence. You say you suffer; well, I will learn to suffer. We will cease to see each other; and then, when we have recovered some calmness, — well, *then* we will try to arrange for ourselves some sort of happiness approved by the world. I am young, Armand; a man without delicacy would do many things to compromise a woman of twenty-four. But you! you will always be my friend? — promise me."

"The woman of twenty-four is old enough to calculate," he answered.

He sat down on the divan and held his head between his hands.

"Madame," he said, lifting his head and showing a face full of resolution, "do you love me? Answer boldly, yes or no."

The duchess was more frightened by this question than if he had threatened to kill himself, — a vulgar trick, which does not alarm women of the nineteenth century now that men no longer wear their swords by their sides.

"Ah," she said; "if I were but free, I —"

"Is it only your husband that is in the way?" cried the general joyfully, getting up and walking with great strides up and down the room. "My dear Antoinette, I possess a more absolute power than the autocrat of all the Russias. I am on good terms with fate. I can, socially speaking, move it at my will like the hands of a watch. To guide fate in our

political machine we have only to study the mechanism. Give yourself no concern; in a short time you shall be free; and then — remember your promise."

"Armand!" she cried, "what do you mean? Good God! surely you do not think I could be the reward of a crime? Do you seek my death? Have you no religion? For myself, I fear God. Though Monsieur de Langeais has certainly given me the right to hate him, I wish him no ill."

Monsieur de Montriveau, who was beating tattoo on the chimney-piece with his fingers, contented himself by looking at the duchess with a calm smile.

"My friend," she continued, "respect him. He does not love me; he is not mine in any sense; still I have a duty towards him. To spare him the misfortunes you threaten there is nothing that I would not do. Listen," she said, after a pause, "I will not talk to you any more of separation. You shall come here as before. I will let you kiss my forehead: if I did refuse it sometimes it was pure coquetry; I admit that. But let us understand each other," she said, seeing him approach her. "I must be permitted to enlarge the number of my pretenders. I shall receive them at all hours, and in greater number than I do now. I shall be very gay, and treat you harshly, and pretend we are parted, and then —"

"And then," cried Montriveau, as he passed his arm about her and she lifted her brow to let him kiss it, "you will not talk to me again of your husband; you ought not even to think of him."

Madame de Langeais kept silence. "At any rate," she said at last, "you will do all that I ask of you,

without grumbling, without making yourself disagreeable, — will you not, dear friend? Ah, you only wanted to frighten me? Come, confess it! But tell me, have you secrets that I know nothing about? What do you mean by controlling fate?"

"At such a moment, when you confirm the gift of your heart, I am far too happy to know how I should answer you. I put my trust in you, dear Antoinette; I will have no doubts, no jealousy. *But* — if chance should set you at liberty we are united — "

"Chance, Armand!" she cried, with one of those pretty gestures of the head which seemed to mean so much, and which she gave so lightly, "chance! remember, if through you any misfortune happens to Monsieur de Langeais, I will never be yours."

They parted mutually satisfied. The duchess had made terms which enabled her to prove to all the world that Monsieur de Montriveau was not her lover; and as for him, the wily creature purposed to tire him out by granting no other favors than those he snatched in the little quarrels which she could incite or arrest as she pleased. She knew so well how to revoke on the morrow a concession granted the night before; and she was so seriously determined to remain virtuous that she saw no risk to herself in these preliminaries, dangerous as they might be to a woman really in love.

On his side, Montriveau, quite happy in having extorted the vaguest of promises, and in putting aside forever the objection raised on the score of the husband, congratulated himself on his conquest of new ground. It must be owned that he abused these rights of conquest. More youthful in heart than he had ever yet

been, he gave himself up to those childish delights which make a first love the flower of our life. He was like a child again, — pouring out his soul and his cheated passion upon the hands of his idol, upon the ripples of her blond hair, or the white brow that seemed to him so pure.

Bathed in love, the duchess lingered, hesitating to begin the quarrel which was to separate them forever. She was more of a woman than she thought she was, — the fragile creature! striving to reconcile the claims of religion with the livelier emotions of vanity and the phantom pleasure which the true Parisian idolizes. Every Sunday she heard Mass and all the offices of the Church; every evening she plunged into the intoxicating play with greater relish. Armand and Madame de Langeais were like the Fakirs of India, who are rewarded for their chastity by the temptations it offers them. Perhaps the duchess had come to persuade herself that these fraternal caresses, innocent enough in the eyes of the world, were the whole of love. How else explain the mystery of her perpetual fluctuations? Every morning she resolved to close her doors to Montriveau; every evening the appointed hour found her still beneath the charm. After fencing feebly for a while she would become less provoking, sweeter and more gracious: lovers only could have been thus to each other. The duchess displayed her natural sparkling wit and her winning ways; then, when she had brought her lover to her feet, and he had reached the *ne plus ultra* of his passion, she grew angry if he forgot himself and threatened to pass the barriers she imposed upon him.

But as no woman can really deny herself to love without a reason, Madame de Langeais looked about her for a second line of fortifications more difficult to carry than the first. She invoked the terrors of religion. No father of the Church ever preached more eloquent morality than she; never was the vengeance of the Most High better proclaimed than by the voice of our duchess. Not that she employed the phraseology of sermons, or the amplifications of rhetoric. No, indeed! she had her own especial pathos. Armand's ardent supplications she met with tearful glances, with gestures that revealed a tumult of feeling; she silenced him by imploring mercy: a word more and she could not bear it—she should perish; better death than a dishonorable happiness.

"Is it nothing to disobey God?" she would say in a voice made feeble by the inward conflict which the pretty comedian had such apparent difficulty to subdue. "Men, the world, all, I would gladly sacrifice for you; but are you not very selfish to ask of me my future life merely to satisfy your own desires? Come, tell me, are you not happy now?" she added, giving him her hand and the consolation of a glance.

Sometimes, to retain a man whose ardent love gave her new and unaccustomed emotions, or perhaps out of mere weakness, she let him snatch a few hasty kisses before she frowned and blushed and banished him to a distance.

"Your pleasures are sins that I must expiate: they cost me penitence, remorse!" she cried.

When Montriveau found himself three chairs off from those aristocratic draperies, he would begin to swear and curse his fate. Then the duchess was indignant.

"My friend," she would say drily, "I cannot understand why you refuse to believe in God; for certainly it is impossible to believe in man. Be silent, and do not speak in that manner. Your soul is too noble to share the follies of liberalism which blots out God."

Discussions, theological and political, served her as shower-baths to calm Montriveau, who was too genuine to get back to love when she had once made him angry and sent him a thousand miles away from the boudoir into theories of absolutism, which she expounded admirably. Few women dare to be democratic; it puts them at odds with their own natural despotism. Sometimes, however, the general turned upon her, shook his mane, ignored politics and religion, growled like a lion, lashed his sides, and came up to his mistress terrible with emotion and incapable of holding thought and love in a leash any longer. If she then felt within her the movings of some fancy strong enough to compromise her, she would flit from the boudoir, surcharged as it was with desires, to the piano in the *salon*, and sing the sweetest airs of modern music, thus evading a struggle which perhaps she had no strength to overcome. At such moments she was sublime in Montriveau's eyes: he thought her true; he thought she loved him; he adored the resistance which made him take her — poor lover! — for a pure and saintly being. With such thoughts he resigned himself, and began to talk of friendship and the pleasures of platonic love, — he! the general of artillery!

When she had played religion long enough in her own interests, Madame de Langeais played it over again for his. She endeavored to bring him back to Christian

sentiments, and remodelled the Genius of Christianity to the special needs of the army. But here Montriveau grew impatient, found the yoke heavy, and resisted. Oh! then, by way of rebuke, my lady threatened the thunders of the Church, hoping in her heart that God would soon rid her of a man who held to his purpose with a constancy which began seriously to frighten her.

## X.

If the opposition made in the name of marriage represented the civil epoch of this sentimental war, the present struggle was the religious epoch; and it had, like its predecessor, a crisis, after which its fury somewhat abated. One evening Armand, arriving rather earlier than usual, found the Abbé Gondrand, the director of Madame de Langeais' conscience, established in an armchair near the fire with the air of a man who was comfortably digesting a good dinner and the pretty sins of his penitent. At the sight of this man, with his rosy placid face, whose forehead was calm, his mouth ascetic, his glance slyly inquisitorial, and whose bearing had the true ecclesiastical dignity which threw a tint of episcopal violet on his clothes, Montriveau's face clouded over; he bowed to no one and kept silence. Outside of his love the general was not wanting in tact. He guessed, as he glanced at the embryo bishop, that here was the man who prompted the difficulties with which the duchess fenced about her love. That an ambitious priest should filch and pocket the happiness of a man of his stamp!—the thought made him boil with rage; he clinched his hands, and began to walk angrily about the room. But when he came back to his seat, resolved to give open vent to his feelings, a single look from the duchess sufficed to calm him.

Madame de Langeais, in nowise disturbed by the black silence of her lover, which would have embarrassed any other woman, continued to converse in a lively manner with Monsieur Gondrand on the necessity of re-establishing religion in all its ancient splendor. She expounded, much more cleverly than the abbé could, the reasons why the Church should be the great power temporal as well as spiritual, and regretted that the French Chamber of Peers had not a bench of bishops like the English House of Lords. However, the abbé, aware that Lent would soon give him his revenge, finally yielded his place to the general, and went away. The duchess scarcely rose to acknowledge the humble bow of her director, so occupied was she in watching Montriveau's behavior.

"What is the matter, my friend?"

"Your abbé turns my stomach."

"Pray, why did you not take a book?" she said, without caring whether the abbé, who was just closing the door, heard her or not.

Montriveau remained silent a moment, for the duchess accompanied her speech with a gesture that added to its excessive impertinence.

"My dear Antoinette, I thank you for giving precedence to love over the Church; but I beg you will permit me to ask you one thing—"

"Ah, you question me? Very well," she replied; "are you not my friend? I can show you the depths of my heart; you will find but one image there."

"Have you spoken to that man of our love?"

"He is my confessor."

"Does he know that I love you?"

"Monsieur de Montriveau, you surely do not presume to ask the secrets of the confessional?"

"Then that man does know our quarrels and all my love for you?"

"A man, Monsieur? — say God."

"God! God! I ought to be first in your heart. Leave God where he is, for his honor and mine. Madame, you shall not go any more to confession, or —"

"Or?" she said smiling.

"Or I will never see you more."

"Then adieu, Armand; adieu for ever!"

She rose and went into her boudoir without casting a single glance at Montriveau, who remained standing in the middle of the room, his hand resting on the back of a chair. How long he stood there he never knew. The soul has a mysterious power of contracting or extending time.

He opened the door of the boudoir: all was dark within.

A feeble voice gathered strength to say, "I did not ring. Why do you enter without orders, Susette? Leave me."

"You suffer?" cried Montriveau.

"Leave me, Monsieur," she answered, ringing the bell. "Leave me — at least for a moment."

"Madame la duchesse rang for lights," he said to the footman, who came into the boudoir and lighted the candles.

When the two were alone Madame de Langeais remained on the divan silent, motionless, precisely as if Montriveau were not there.

"Dear!" he said, with an accent of pain and tender kindness, "I was wrong: I would not have you without religion."

"How fortunate that you recognize the duty of conscience!" she said in a hard voice, without looking at him. "I thank you on behalf of God."

Here the general, withered by this inclemency, made a step towards the door, and was about to leave her without a word. He suffered; and the duchess in her heart was laughing at sufferings caused by a moral torture infinitely more cruel to the soldier than the tortures of his African captivity. But he was not to be allowed to go. In all crises a woman is, if we may say so, pregnant with a certain quantity of words; and when she is not delivered of them, she suffers from a sensation that things are incomplete. Madame de Langeais had by no means said her say; so she resumed: —

"I am grieved, general, that we have not the same convictions. It would be terrible for a woman not to believe in a religion which allows her to love beyond the grave. I say nothing of Christian sentiments, for you cannot understand them; but let me speak to you of the proprieties of the Christian life. Would you deny to women of the court the right of confession as a preparation for the duties of Easter? You liberals cannot kill the religious sentiment, though you may wish to do so. Religion will always be a political necessity. Do you expect to be able to govern a nation of pure reasoners? Napoleon could not; he persecuted thought. To keep the people from reasoning, you must give them sentiments. Let us accept therefore the Catholic religion with all its consequences; and if we wish the people

to go to Mass, we must go there ourselves. Religion, Armand, as you can see for yourself, is the bond of the conservative principles which enable the rich to live in safety. Religion is therefore the first of proprieties. You must admit it is a finer thing to lead a nation by moral ideas instead of scaffolds, as in the days of the Terror, — the only means your detestable Revolution found for enforcing its principles! Priesthood, monarchy, what are they? Why, they are you, they are I, they are my neighbor the princess; in a word, they are the welfare of all respectable people personified. Come, my friend, be on our side, — you who might be its Sylla if you had the least ambition. As for me, I am quite ignorant of politics, — I only reason from feeling; but I certainly do know that society will be upset if its base is to be called in question at every moment."

"If these are the opinions of your court and your government, I am sorry for them," said Montriveau. "The Restoration, Madame, should say like Catherine de Medicis, when she thought the battle of Dreux was lost, 'Well, we will go to their conventicles.' The year 1814 was your battle of Dreux. Like the throne of those days, you have gained it in appearance and lost it in fact. Political protestantism is victorious in the minds of all. If you don't want to make an Edict of Nantes, or if, making it, you revoke it, — if some day you are tried and convicted of desiring to do away with the Charter, which was a pledge given to maintain the interests of the Revolution, — a second revolution will arise which will give you but one blow. Liberalism will not be the one that is driven from France: liberalism is in the soil; nay, it is the soil itself. Men may die,

but the interests of — Good God! but what is France, the throne, legitimacy, the world itself, compared to my love, my happiness?—idle tales. Conquering or conquered, what is it all to me? Ah, where am I?"

"In the boudoir of the Duchesse de Langeais, my friend."

"No, no! no longer the duchess, nor de Langeais: I am beside my own Antoinette."

"Will you be good enough to stay where you are," she said laughing, and gently repelling him.

"Have you never loved me?" he exclaimed, with angry eyes.

"No, my friend."

But the no had the tone of a yes.

"I am a great fool," he said, kissing the hands of this terrible queen suddenly reduced to womanhood. "Antoinette," he continued, resting his head upon her feet, "you are too chaste and tender to tell our love to any one in the world."

"Ah, you are indeed a great fool!" she cried, springing up with a quick and graceful movement, and flitting into the *salon* without another word.

"What is the matter?" demanded the general, who could not guess the electric shock which the touch of his burning brow had sent from the feet to the head of his mistress.

When he reached the *salon* he heard the soft chords of the piano at which the duchess had taken refuge. Men of science or of poetic impulse, who can apprehend and enjoy without losing their enjoyment in the process of reflection, feel that notes and phrases of music are a medium which conveys the soul of the

musician, just as wood and brass are the instruments of the artificer. For them there is a music apart in the depths of this sensuous language of the soul. *Andiamo mio ben* can bring tears of joy or scornful laughter, as the singer may sing it. Often, here and there in the world, young hearts dying under the weight of hidden grief, men whose souls are wrung with the tortures of passion, seize strains of music which bring them into harmony with heaven, or soothe their anguish with some melody hiding like a poem within them.

The general now listened to such a poem, hidden away in a soul like the song of a bird lonely without its mate in the depths of a virgin forest.

"What are you playing?" he asked in a voice full of emotion.

"The prelude to a ballad called, I think, 'Fleuve du Tage.'"

"I did not know that the piano could give forth such music."

"Ah, my friend!" she said, giving him for the first time the glance of a loving woman, "neither do you know that I love you; that you make me suffer horribly; that I must find a way to complain in secret, or I should yield to you. Ah, yes, indeed you see nothing!"

"Yet you will not make me happy?"

"Armand, if I did I should die of it!"

The general left her brusquely, but when he reached the street he wiped away the tears which he had had the strength to restrain till then.

Religion lasted three months. At the end of that time the duchess, weary of her prayers, delivered over

the Church, bound hand and foot, to her lover. Perhaps she was afraid that by dint of preaching eternity she might perpetuate the general's love in this world and the next. For the honor of this woman we must believe that she was virgin, even in heart; otherwise her conduct would be too cruel. Far from the age at which men and women approach the limits of the future and cease to wrangle about their happiness, she was, not perhaps at her first fancy, but assuredly on the borders of her first love. Without experience whereby to judge, without the knowledge of suffering that might have taught her the value of the treasures poured at her feet, she was ignorantly amusing herself with them. Blind to the light and joy of love she contentedly played with its shadow.

Armand, who began at last to comprehend the singularities of this condition, counted much on the first promptings of nature. He reflected day by day, as he left Madame de Langeais, that no woman could accept for seven months the devotion of a man and so many tender and delicate proofs of it, or yield these superficial gains to his love, and betray him finally; he waited therefore the rising of the sun, confident that the fruit would ripen in due season. He understood her scruples and rejoiced in them. He thought her chaste and dignified, and he would not have had her otherwise, when in fact she was only horribly coquettish. He liked to see her raise obstacles which he could gradually overcome; and each triumph added a trifle to the slender rights which, one by one, after long withholding, she had granted with the semblance at least of love. But he so thoroughly assimilated these slight

and progressive gains, that they were soon habitual to him, and erelong he believed he had only his own hesitations to vanquish. In his heart he saw no greater hindrance to his passion than the waywardness of her who allowed him to call her Antoinette; and at last he resolved to press forward and demand all. Timid as a young lover who cannot yet believe that his idol will bow down to him, he hesitated long, and passed through terrible reactions of the heart; desires formed only to be annihilated by a look; resolutions taken which were swept away at the threshold of a door. He despised himself for not having strength to say the word, and yet he did not say it.

At last, one evening he began in a tone of sombre sadness to put forth a claim to his illegally legitimate rights. The duchess did not need any words from her slave; she knew perfectly what was in his mind. Is a man's hope ever secret? Are not women steeped in the science of deciphering every change of his countenance? Madame de Langeais stopped Montriveau at his first word.

"Would you cease to be my friend?" she asked, with a glance made lovelier by the blush which flowed beneath her transparent cheek. "As a reward for all my generosity would you bring me to dishonor? Reflect a moment. I have reflected much. I have reflected as a woman. Women have their integrity to maintain, as men maintain their honor. I could not deceive. If I became yours, I could not remain in any way the wife of Monsieur de Langeais. Therefore you exact the sacrifice of my position, my rank, my life, for a doubtful love which has lasted only seven months.

What! would you take from me my freedom, my liberty? No, no! do not speak of it; say no more."

Here the duchess with both hands put back her hair which seemed to heat her brow, and looked excited.

"You come to a feeble woman," she continued, "with calculations in your mind. You have said to yourself: 'She will talk to me of her husband for a time, then of religion; and that will be the last of her resistance. I will use and abuse the rights I have conquered: I shall then be necessary to her. I shall have on my side the ties of habit, the public recognition of my claims; the world accepts our *liaison*, and I shall be her master.' Be frank, are not these your thoughts? Ah! you calculated, and you call that love? Love! no, indeed; you merely wish me for your mistress. Well, then! the Duchesse de Langeais does not descend so low as that. Let commoner women be the dupes of your calculation, — I will never be. What surety does your love offer me? You talk to me of my beauty: I may be ugly in six months, like the dear princess, my neighbor. You are charmed with my wit, my grace: but before long you will get accustomed to them just as you get accustomed to every pleasure. Have you not already made a habit of every little favor I have accorded you? When it is too late, you will come to me and give as your sole reason for deserting me, 'I love you no longer.' Rank, fortune, honor, all that is the Duchesse de Langeais, will be swallowed up in a hope deceived, and —

"But," she resumed, "I am too kind to say more: indeed you already know it all. Now, let this end. I am too happy as I am to change the state of things.

And as for you, — has it been so very heroic to spend a few hours daily at the Hôtel de Langeais, with a woman whose chatter amused you? There are several young fops who come to see me daily, from four to six o'clock, as regularly as you come in the evenings. Are they very generous? I laugh at them; they take my whims and my nonsense in good part. They amuse me; but you, — you to whom I have really given the best within me, — you wish me evil, and cause me grief. Hush! hush!" she said, seeing him about to speak; "you have no heart, nor soul, nor delicacy. I know what you are trying to say. Well, then, *yes!* I would rather be cold, unfeeling, without a heart, without devotion in your eyes, than seem in the eyes of the world one of the common race of women who sacrifice everything to the pretended love of a man. Your selfish love is not worth such a sacrifice."

These words give but a faint idea of the sentences which the duchess warbled forth with the lively prolixity of a canary. She might have talked on indefinitely; for the poor general's sole reply to the flute-like phrases was silence teeming with painful thoughts. He perceived for the first time the coquetry of this woman, and guessed instinctively that a true devotion could not reason thus in the heart of a tender woman. Then he was stung with shame as he remembered that he had involuntarily made the calculations with which she bitterly reproached him. Examining his conscience with a candor that was almost angelic, he saw selfishness in his words, his thoughts, even in the answers which came into his mind and were smothered there. He blamed himself; in his despair the thought crossed

him of disappearing forever. The *I* paralyzed him. Of what use was it to speak of love to a woman who believed in none? How could he say to her, "Let me prove to you that I love you?" — *I*, always *I!*

Montriveau, unlike ordinary heroes of the boudoir in similar circumstances, was not wise enough to imitate the rough logician who marched before the Pyrrhonians while denying his own movement. This man of noted courage failed in audacity precisely where lovers who know the formula of female algebra are strongest. If many women, even the best, fall a prey to the calculations of clever men, it may possibly be because the latter are sound mathematicians, and know that love, in spite of its delightful poetry of sentiment, demands more geometry than we think for.

The duchess and Montriveau were alike in one respect, — they were equally inexpert in love. She knew very little of its theory, and absolutely nothing of its practice. She felt nothing, and what she knew came only through reflection. Montriveau knew little of its practice, was totally ignorant of its theory, and felt far too much to reflect at all. Both, therefore, were in the grasp of their unfortunate situation. At this moment Armand thought that all resolved itself into two words: "Be mine!" — phrase full of egotism to a woman for whom the words bore neither memories nor hopes. He was forced however to make her some reply. Though lashed by her little phrases shot like arrows, sharp, steely, stinging, delivered one after another with penetrating force, he was compelled to dissemble his anger lest he should lose all by a passionate speech.

"Madame la duchesse," he said, "I am in despair that God has appointed no other way for a woman to confirm the gift of her heart than by adding to it the gift of her person. The high price which you attach to yourself shows me that I, at least, should not attach to it a lesser. If you give me your soul and its emotions, as you say you do, what matter for the rest? If my happiness is to you so painful a sacrifice, let us say no more about it. Only, you must permit a man of honor to feel that he is humiliated in being taken for a spaniel."

The tone of these words might well have frightened any woman; but when one of these Peris is lifted above this earth and turned into a divinity, there is no pride here below that equals hers.

"Monsieur le marquis," she answered, "I am in despair that God has appointed no nobler way for a man to confirm the gift of his heart than by the manifestation of desires which are — prodigiously vulgar. In giving ourselves, we women become slaves for life; but the men who accept us commit themselves to nothing. What assurance have I that I should be always loved? The love that I should be forced to show at all times to keep you bound to me might be the very reason of your desertion. I do not choose to be a second edition of Madame de Beauséant. Who knows what it is that keeps a man faithful to a woman? Constant coldness is the secret of the constant passion of some of you; others demand a ceaseless devotion. For some, tenderness; for others, tyranny. No woman has ever yet fully fathomed your hearts."

There was a painful pause, and then she changed her tone.

"My friend, you cannot prevent a woman from trembling before the question, 'Shall I be always loved?' Hard as my words are, they come from the fear of losing you. Ah, believe me; it is not I, dear, who speaks to you, but reason. How is it that such a light creature as I can reason? Indeed, I cannot tell."

As he listened to this answer, begun in a tone of trenchant irony and ended with the sweetest accents a woman's voice could take to picture love in all its candor, Montriveau passed in a moment from martyrdom to the skies. He turned pale, and for the first time in his life he fell on his knees at the feet of a woman. He kissed the hem of her robe — but for the honor of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, let us not reveal an emotion betrayed in this boudoir, where all of love was accepted and none was given.

"Antoinette!" cried Montriveau in the delirium of joy caused by the surrender of the duchess, who was thinking herself very generous for permitting his adoration, "you are right. You shall have no room to doubt. At this moment I tremble myself, lest I lose the angel of my life. I will seek a way to make our bonds indissoluble —"

"Ah," she whispered, "you see I was right."

"Let me finish what I was about to say. I will with one word dispel your doubts. Listen! I pledge myself to die if I desert you. Be mine, and I will give you the right to kill me if I betray you. I will write a letter in which I declare reasons that compelled me to destroy myself. I will make it my last will; you shall hold it as a testament which will justify my death; you shall

know that you are avenged without danger to yourself from God or man."

"What need have I of such a document? If I lose thy love, what is life to me? If I should kill thee, would I not follow thee? No, I am grateful for the thought; but I do not want the letter. Might it not make me think my Armand faithful to me through fear? — or rather, would not this very danger lend a charm to infidelity for one who loves to risk his life? Armand, the one thing I require is the only thing that is hard for thee to do."

"What is it, love?" he whispered.

"Thy obedience, and my liberty."

"My God!" he said. "I am but a child!"

"A spoiled, yet willing child," she answered, caressing the head which still lay upon her knees. "More loved than he thinks for, yet far too disobedient. Ah, let us stay as we are! Make me the sacrifice of wishes which offend me. Why not accept what I give, if it is all that I can honestly grant? Are you not happy, Armand?"

"Oh, yes!" he answered. "I am happy — happy now that I cannot doubt your love. Antoinette! when we love, to doubt is death."

Under the strong feeling of the moment he showed himself for what he was, and grew eloquent and tenderly perceptive. The duchess, as she permitted these emotions, sanctioned perhaps by some secret and jesuitical ukase, felt all the mental excitement which made Armand's love as necessary to her as her balls or the opera. To see herself adored by a man who inspired fear in others; to make him a child, and play with him as Poppæa played with Nero, — all this was a perilous

delight which many women, like the wives of Henry VIII., have paid for with their life's blood. Well, curious presentiment! as she let him kiss the blond ripples of her hair, as she felt the pressure of the small hand of this man so honorably great, as she played herself with his black locks in the boudoir where she reigned a queen, the duchess said to herself, "This man is capable of killing me, if he once perceives that I am trifling with him."

## XI.

Monsieur de Montriveau remained till two in the morning beside his mistress, who thenceforth was to him no longer a duchess, nor a Navarreins; Antoinette had pushed her deception so far as to seem a woman. During this delightful evening — the sweetest prelude that a Parisian woman ever gave to what the world would term *a fault* — the general was permitted to see her, despite the affectations of a coquettish modesty, in all the true beauty of a young girl. He might think with reason that these quarrels were like veils which wrapped a heaven-born soul, to be lifted one by one as he raised the gauze which she loved to wind about her throat. The duchess was to him the most artless and ingenuous of women, the wife of his choice; and he went away happy in the thought that having brought her to grant him so many pledges of affection, he must be to her for evermore a husband in secret, approved in the sight of God.

He went slowly homeward, following the quays that he might see the open heaven above him; his lungs breathed in more air; he needed the firmament, and the breadth of nature for his expanding heart. As he walked he questioned himself solemnly. He vowed to love this woman so religiously that she should find each day in constant happiness an absolution for her social error. Men of the stamp who dye their souls with one only sentiment feel an infinite joy in contemplating by snatches a whole life

time of devotion, as some recluses contemplate the light divine in ecstasy. Without this belief in its perpetuity, love would be to them as nothing: faithfulness is the fabric of such love. It was thus that Montriveau comprehended his passion as he walked along in the grasp of joy.

"We are joined forever!" this thought was a talisman that held the dedication of a lifetime. He never asked himself if the duchess would change, if this love would last. No, he had faith, — a virtue without which there can be no Christian future, but which is still more necessary to societies. For the first time he conceived of life by the light of feeling, — he who had hitherto lived only in excess of human action, the devotion half corporeal of a soldier.

The following day Monsieur de Montriveau went early to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, having an appointment in a house near the Hôtel de Langeais, where, as soon as he had transacted his business, he turned his steps as if to his own home. The general was joined by a man for whom in company he appeared to feel an aversion. It was the Marquis de Ronquerolles, whose reputation was very high in the boudoirs of Paris, — a man of wit and talent, above all of courage, who gave the tone to the young men of the day; a brave man whose experience and whose success were equally envied, and who lacked neither the birth nor the fortune which add lustre to the qualities of a man of the world.[1]

[1] Montriveau and Ronquerolles belonged to the "Company of the Thirteen," — a secret society of thirteen men of rank bound by no conventional ties, recognizing no laws, obeying only their own sense of devotion, and acting all for each when any of their number needed assistance. These brothers gave each other no recognition in society; in secret, they were one soul in thirteen bodies.

"Where are you going?" said Monsieur de Ronquerolles to Montriveau.

"To the Duchesse de Langeais."

"Ah, true; I forgot that you were caught in her net. You will waste with her a love you had much better carry elsewhere. I know ten women who are worth a thousand of that titled courtesan, who does with her head what other women do with —"

"Hush!" said Montriveau, "the duchess is an angel of truth and candor."

Ronquerolles laughed. "If you have got as far as that, my dear fellow, I must enlighten you. One word, however; between us it cannot matter. Is the duchess yours? If she is, I will say no more. But tell me the truth, for I cannot let you fasten that noble heart of yours to a nature that will betray every hope you form."

When Armand had given a sketch of his situation, scrupulously relating with all his natural candor the slender rights he had won with so much difficulty, Ronquerolles burst into a fit of laughter which would have cost the life of any other man; but an observer who saw how these men looked and spoke to each other, standing alone in the angle of a wall, as far from the world of men as if they were in the middle of a desert, would have felt that they were united by some bond which no interest in life could loosen.

"My dear Armand, why did you not tell me that you were involved with the duchess? I could have given you advice that would have brought you well out of the affair. You ought to know that the women of our faubourg, like all others, delight in being bathed in

love, but only so far as possessing all without being possessed themselves. The jurisprudence of the church allows everything short of actual sin. They compound with nature. The favors which the lovely duchess doles out to you are venial faults, which she washes off with the waters of penitence. But if you had the impertinence to demand seriously the mortal sin, you would see with what profound disdain the doors of the boudoir and the hôtel would be shut in your face. Your tender Antoinette would forget all her promises; you would be less than nothing to her. Your kisses, my dear friend, are wiped off with her rouge. I know that sort of woman, — pure Parisian. Did you never notice a little *grisette* tripping daintily along? Her head is a picture, — pretty cap, fresh cheeks, coquettish hair, arch smile; the rest of her very little cared for. Is n't that a good portrait? That is the Parisian woman. Well, your duchess is all head. She feels with her head; her heart is in her head, so is her voice; she is dainty through her head. I call that poor species the intellectual Laïs. She is playing with you. If you doubt me, the proof is at hand. To-night, to-day, now — go at once and demand imperiously that she shall grant what she now refuses; even though you set about it like the late Maréchal de Richelieu."

Armand was dumb.

"Are you resolved to have her?"

"I will win her at any price," cried Montriveau desperately.

"Well, then, listen. Be as implacable as she will be; try to humiliate her, to pique her vanity, to rouse, not her heart, not her soul, but her nerves and her

lymph, — for such a woman is both nervous and lymphatic. If you can give birth to a desire in her soul you are safe. But resign all your beautiful ideas of love and tenderness. If having caught her in eagle's claws you hesitate, you yield an inch, — if an eyelash quiver, if she thinks she can still control you, — she will slip from your talons like a fish and escape, never to be caught again. Be inflexible as law. Have no more mercy than the executioner. Strike! having struck, strike again! Strike as if with a knout! A duchess is hard, my dear Armand; and it is the nature of such women to soften only under blows. Suffering gives them a heart, and it is a work of charity to strike them. When pain has wrung their nerves, slackened the fibres that you think so tender, made the heart beat back to elasticity, when the brain yields, — ah, *then* passion may enter that metallic mechanism of tears and sighs and tricks and touching phrases; then you will see the most magnificent of conflagrations, — that is to say, if the chimney takes fire. That 's the kind of female steel that burns red in the forge and comes up to proof: out of it you may get love, though I doubt it. And then, moreover, is your duchess worth the trouble? Between ourselves, she might better have fallen to a man like me. I should have made a charming woman of her; she has race. But as for you two, you will stay always at the *A*, *B*, *C* of love. Ah, well! you care for her, and you can't share my ideas in the matter.

"All happiness to you!" added Ronquerolles, after a pause, laughing. "For my part I declare in favor of easy women. They are tender: they love naturally, without all these social condiments. My poor

fellow, what is a woman who only wants to inspire love? Very well as a matter of luxury, very amusing to watch at her little game of Church against Eros, white against black, her majesty against a fool, scruples against pleasure, — a very diverting game of chess, I admit, which a man who knows what he is about would check-mate in three moves. If I undertook a woman of that kind I should — "

He whispered a few words in Armand's ear, and went away brusquely that he might not hear his answer.

As for Montriveau, he made one bound across the courtyard of the Hôtel de Langeais, went up to the duchess without allowing the servants to announce him, and sought her in her bedroom.

"But this is not the thing!" she said, hastily gathering her dressing-robe about her. "Leave me, I beg of you! Go, go! Wait for me in the *salon*. Go!"

"My angel!" he said, "has a husband no rights?"

"Your manners are detestable, Monsieur. No husband has the right to surprise a wife in this way."

He came up to her, and took her in his arms.

"Forgive me, dear Antoinette, but my mind is suddenly filled with doubts, suspicions."

"Suspicions? for shame! for shame!"

"Suspicions which seem almost justified. If you loved me, would you now quarrel with me? Would you not rejoice to see me? Would you not feel some impulse of the heart? I, who am not a woman, tremble at the very tones of your voice. The desire to fall upon your neck has often assailed me in the midst of a ball — "

"Oh, if you suspect me because I do not fall upon your breast in a ball-room, I fear I shall be under

suspicion all my life! But really, in comparison with you Othello was a baby."

"Ah," he said in despair, "I am not loved!"

"At least you will admit," she said, "that you are not amiable."

"Have I still to seek to please you?"

"So it would seem. Come!" she said, with a little imperative air, "go, leave me! I am not like you; I do seek to please you."

No woman knew better than Madame de Langeais how to put grace into her insolence, and thus double its effect, — a measure which renders the coldest of men furious. At this moment her eyes, the tones of her voice, her attitudes, all expressed an ease and freedom which could not have been felt by a loving woman in presence of him who had the power to stir her heart. Armand, his wits sharpened by Monsieur de Ronquerolles, and still farther enlightened by the rapid perception which pain momentarily lends even to the least sagacious of men, and which is all-powerfully clear in strong minds, divined the terrible truth which the self-possession of the duchess betrayed: his spirit rose like a wave lashed by the winds.

"If you spoke the truth yesterday, be mine, Antoinette!" he cried. "I will —"

"In the first place," she said, repelling him calmly, "do not compromise me; my waiting-woman might hear you. Respect me, I beg. Your familiarities are very well in the evening, in my boudoir; but here — no. And pray what signifies your 'I will'? I will! No one ever dared to say that to me before. I regard it as ridiculous, — perfectly ridiculous."

"You will not yield to me on this point?"

"Ah, you call it a point? — the free disposition of ourselves! A point, truly, of some importance! and you will permit me to be, on this point, the sole judge."

"And if, trusting to your promises, I exact it?"

"Then you will prove to me that I have done wrong to make you the faintest promises, and I shall not be so foolish as to keep them. Have the goodness to leave me in peace."

Montriveau turned very pale, and was about to spring forward. The duchess rang, and as her maid entered, she said with mocking courtesy, "Do me the kindness to wait in the *salon* till I am visible."

The hardness of this woman, cold and cutting as steel, overbearing in her contempt, struck home to the mind of Armand de Montriveau. In this one moment she burst the bonds that held him to her. The duchess had read on Armand's brow the meaning of this sudden visit, and judged that the moment had come to make the imperial soldier know that a duchess might lend herself to love, but *give* herself never; and that the conquest was beyond the power even of those who had conquered Europe.

"Madame," said Montriveau, "I have not the time to wait. I am, as you once said, a spoiled child: when I seriously wish for that of which we were speaking just now, I shall have it."

"You will have it?" she said with a haughty manner, in which was mingled some surprise.

"I shall have it."

"Ah, how good of you to wish it! As a matter of curiosity I should like to know how you intend to get it."

"I am enchanted," said Montriveau, laughing in a way that really frightened her, "to have put an interest into your life. Will you permit me to take you to the ball to-night?"

"A thousand thanks, but Monsieur de Marsay has preceded you. I go with him."

Montriveau bowed gravely, and withdrew. "Ronquerolles was right," he said; "it is to be a game of chess."

From that moment the general hid his feelings under an appearance of perfect calmness, though no man has the strength to bear unshaken the rapid changes his soul must undergo as he passes from the highest happiness to supreme despair. Had he beheld a life of happiness only to feel more deeply the void of his existence? It was a terrible tornado. But he knew how to suffer; and he bore the rush of his tumultuous thoughts as the granite rock receives the onset of an angry ocean.

"I could say nothing to her; in her presence my thoughts fail. She does not know how vile and despicable she is. No man has ever dared to put this woman face to face with herself. She must have trifled with many men. I will avenge them all!"

For the first time, perhaps in the heart of man, love and revenge were so mingled that Montriveau himself could not tell for some time which had the ascendancy. He went to the ball, where he knew she would be, and was tempted to ascribe something diabolical to the gracious manner and charming smile with which she greeted him. The duchess was evidently determined

that the world should know she was not committed to Montriveau. A mutual coolness would have betrayed love; but if the duchess made no change in her manner and the marquis was cold and distant, it was apparent, of course, that the latter had gained nothing from his suit. The world is quick to recognize a discarded man, and never confounds his appearance with that of other men whom their mistresses direct to feign coldness in the hope of disguising mutual love. Every one smiled at Montriveau, who, under no such orders, was gloomy and thoughtful. Monsieur de Ronquerolles would have told him to compromise the duchess by replying to her false courtesies with demonstrations of devotion. The general left the ball-room with a keen disgust for human nature, yet hardly able to believe it so utterly perverted.

"Since there is no public executioner for such crimes," he said, looking up at the lighted windows of the rooms where the loveliest women in Paris were dancing and smiling, "I will take you by the neck, Madame la duchesse, and make you feel a blade sharper than that of the Place de Grève. Steel to steel! We will see whose heart can be cut the deepest."

## XII.

During the following week Madame de Langeais continually hoped that the Marquis de Montriveau would come to her; but he contented himself by sending his card every morning to the Hôtel de Langeais. Each time that this card was brought to her she was unable to repress a shudder. Dark fears rose in her mind, — indistinct as a vague presage of misfortune. When she read that name she felt her hair in the grasp of his strong hand; sometimes it threatened vengeance, which her active fancy imaged as atrocious. She had studied him too closely not to fear him. Would he assassinate her? This man, with the neck of a bull, would he kill her with a toss of his horns; would he trample her under foot? When, how, where would he seize her? Would he make her suffer? What sort of suffering was he now preparing for her?

She repented. There were moments when if he had come to her she would have flung herself into his arms with complete surrender. Every night as she went to sleep she saw his image under some new aspect: sometimes his bitter smile, sometimes the frown of Jove his brows could wear, his lion-look, or the proud motion of his shoulders made him terrible to her mind. The next day the name on the card would seem printed in letters of blood. She lived agitated by that name far more than she had ever been by the fiery, obstinate, exacting lover. Then as the silence was prolonged, her

apprehensions deepened. She was forced to prepare herself, in solitude and without external succor, for some horrible struggle of which she could know and guess nothing. Her soul, proud and hard, was more alive to the sting of hatred than it had ever been to the caress of love. Oh, if the general could have seen his mistress, as her brows darkened with bitter thoughts in the recesses of that boudoir where once he had tasted the sweetest joys, he would have been filled with hopes that he could make her love him!

Pride, after all, is one of those human emotions which give birth to none but noble actions. Though Madame de Langeais kept the secret of her thoughts, we must believe that Monsieur de Montriveau was no longer indifferent to her. Is it not an immense conquest for a man to absorb a woman's mind? It involves making progress with her in one way or another. Put the feminine creature under the heels of a maddened horse or some other terrible animal, she will fall, of course, upon her knees, and expect death; but if the beast is merciful and does not kill her at once, she will love the horse, the lion, the bull, and speak to it with composure. The duchess felt herself at the feet of the lion; she trembled, but she did not hate him.

These two persons, thus strangely pitted against each other, met three times in society during that week. Each time, in reply to her winning welcome, the duchess received from Montriveau a distant bow and smiles which conveyed such cruel irony that all the terrors of the morning were renewed. Life is what our feelings make of it; and between these two persons feeling had now hollowed an abyss.

The following week the Comtesse de Sérizy, sister of the Marquis de Ronquerolles, gave a large ball, at which Madame de Langeais was present. The first person the duchess saw on entering the room was Armand, and she fancied that he was waiting for her. They exchanged looks. A cold sweat suddenly came from every pore of her skin. She had believed Montriveau capable of some unheard-of vengeance proportioned to the position in which they stood. The vengeance was found! It was waiting, it was hot, it was seething over! The eyes of her betrayed lover darted lightnings at her, and a satisfied hatred was on his face. With the utmost desire to seem cold and supercilious, the duchess remained silent and oppressed. She moved to the side of Madame de Sérizy, who could not forbear saying to her, —

"What is the matter, dear Antoinette? You look frightfully."

"A dance will restore me," she answered, taking the hand of a young man who then came up.

She began to waltz with a sort of nervous transport that redoubled the contemptuous gaze of Montriveau. He stood slightly in advance of the circle which surrounded the dancers, and each time that the duchess passed him his eyes seized upon her revolving head as a tiger seizes upon its prey. The waltz over, she came back to the countess, the marquis still watching her as he talked with a stranger.

"Monsieur," he said to his companion, "one of the things that struck me most in England —"

The duchess was all ears.

"Was the phrase used by the guard at Westminster

as he showed me the axe with which the masked executioner cut off the head of Charles I.; he quoted from the king himself, who said it to a bystander."

"What was it?" asked Madame de Sérizy.

"*Do not touch the axe*," answered Montriveau in a tone which seemed to the duchess like a menace.

"Really, Monsieur le marquis," she said, "you look at my neck with such a melodramatic air as you tell that old story, which any one who has been to London knows by heart, that I fancy I can almost see the axe in your hand."

These words were said in a laughing tone, though a cold chill was running through her veins.

"The story is, on the contrary, a new one," he replied.

"Ah, in what way? Pray tell me."

"In this, Madame," he answered in a low voice: "you have touched the axe."

"Delightful prophecy!" she cried, forcing a smile; "and when is my head to fall?"

"I do not wish your pretty head to fall, Madame. I only fear that some great misfortune is before you. If you were beheaded, would you not be sorry to lose that lovely blond hair, which you employ so well?"

"There are those for whom women are glad to make such sacrifices; yet sometimes they are the ones who will not overlook a woman's momentary ill-humor."

"Agreed. Well, if at once, by some chemical process, a jester were to take away your beauty and make you seem a hundred years old—"

"Ah, Monsieur," she said, interrupting him, "the small-pox is our battle of Waterloo. The day after we have lost it we know those who truly love us."

"Would you not regret that lovely complexion which — "

"Yes, very much, but less for myself than for him who might care for it. Still, if I were sincerely loved, always, faithfully, what would my beauty be to me? What do you think, Clara?"

"A rash discussion," answered Madame de Beauséant.

"Might I ask his Majesty the king of the sorcerers," continued Madame de Langeais, "when I committed the sin of touching the axe, — I, who have never been in London?"

"Not so," he said with a mocking laugh.

"When is the execution to take place?"

Montriveau drew out his watch and looked at the hour with an air of conviction that was really frightful. "The day will not end until a great misfortune has overtaken you."

"I am not a child to be easily frightened, — or rather I am a child that knows no danger," said the duchess; "and I am going to dance on the verge of the abyss."

"Delighted, Madame, to observe your strength of mind," said Montriveau, as she left him to take her place in a quadrille.

Notwithstanding her apparent disdain for the dark predictions of her lover, the duchess fell a prey to mortal terror. The moral and even physical oppression under which he held her scarcely lessened as she saw him leave the room; yet after the momentary relief of breathing at her ease she regretted the absence of fear,

so eager is the female nature for extremes of emotion. This regret was not love, but it belonged undoubtedly to the feelings that were leading up to it. Presently the fear came back to her as she recalled the fixed conviction with which he foretold the hour of her punishment. Unable to control her terror, she left the ball-room to return home. It was then about midnight. Those of her people who were waiting in the antechamber put on her pelisse and went to call up the carriage. Once seated in it, her mind was absorbed in dwelling upon Monsieur de Montriveau's prediction. The carriage reached the courtyard, and she entered a vestibule that closely resembled her own, but suddenly perceived that the staircase was not hers. She turned to call her people, and at the same moment several men seized her, tied a handkerchief over her mouth, bound her hand and foot, and carried her rapidly away. She cried out loudly.

"Madame, we have orders to kill you if you make a noise," said a voice in her ear.

The terror of the duchess was so great that afterwards she could give no account to herself of the direction in which she was carried. When she recovered her senses she was lying, bound hand and foot with silken cords, on a sofa in the chamber of a bachelor. She could not keep back a cry as she encountered the eyes of Armand de Montriveau seated quietly in an arm-chair, wrapped in his dressing-gown and smoking a cigar.

"Make no noise, Madame la duchesse," he said, taking his cigar from his lips, "my head aches; besides, I will unfasten those cords. But you will be so good as to listen to what I have the honor to say to you."

He gently loosened the fastenings that bound her.

"Your cries will do you no good; no one can hear them; and you are far too well-bred to make a useless disturbance. If you are not quiet, if you attempt to struggle with me, I shall bind you again. I believe, however, all things considered, that you respect yourself enough to remain as you are upon that sofa, as if you were lying upon your own, cold and indifferent as ever. You have caused me to shed many bitter tears on that couch, — tears hidden from the eyes of others."

As Montriveau spoke, the duchess cast about her that furtive female glance which sees all, even when it appears most abstracted. She liked the appearance of the room, which resembled that of a monk. The mind and character of the master prevaded it. No ornament relieved the gray uniformity of the wall; the floor had a green carpet; a black sofa, a table covered with papers, a chest of drawers on which stood an alarm-clock, two large arm-chairs, and a low bed over which was thrown a red blanket with a Grecian border in black, all proclaimed the habits of a life brought down to its simplest needs. A branched candlestick on the chimney-piece recalled by its Egyptian shape the limitless deserts this man had traversed. Between the bed, whose feet like the paws of the Sphinx appeared below the folds of the red drapery, and the lateral wall of the chamber, was a door hidden by a green curtain with red and black fringes, held by large rings to a pole. The door through which the unknown hands had brought the duchess had a portière of the same stuff held back by cords.

As the duchess glanced at the curtains to compare them with each other, she noticed that the door next to the bed was open, and that a ruddy light from the

adjoining room shone, in a narrow line, at the foot of the curtain. Her curiosity was naturally roused by this light, which enabled her to see darkly through the texture of the stuff strange moving shapes; but for the moment her danger could not come from thence, and she turned her mind to a more pressing interest.

"Monsieur, is it an indiscretion to ask what you intend to do with me?" she said in a tone of cutting insolence.

The duchess believed she heard the voice of exceeding love in Montriveau's words: besides, when a man carries off a woman must it not mean that he worships her?

"Nothing at all, Madame," he answered, giving a last puff to his cigar. "You are here for a short time only. I wish to explain to you what you are and what I am. When you are attitudinizing in your boudoir I am unable to express my thoughts. If a word offends you, you pull the bell-rope and drive your lover from you as if he were a beggar. Here my mind is free; here no one can dismiss me. Here you will be my victim for a few moments, and you will have the goodness to listen to me. Fear nothing. I have not brought you here to insult you; or to obtain from you by violence that which I have not won, — that which you were not willing to grant to my affection. It would be unworthy of me. You perhaps may conceive of it; I cannot."

He threw his cigar into the fire with a careless motion.

"Perhaps the smoke annoys you, Madame?"

He rose, took a pastile from the chimney-piece, lighted it, and purified the room. The amazement of the duchess was equalled only by her humiliation. She was in the power of this man, and he did not intend to

abuse it! Those eyes, once flaming with love, were now calm and fixed as the stars. She trembled; the terror with which he inspired her was intensified by a keen sensation analogous to the motionless convulsions of a nightmare. She lay gripped by fear, fancying she saw the lurid light behind the curtain grow more vivid, as if blown by bellows. Suddenly the glow deepened; she saw distinctly three masked men, and then the whole vanished so suddenly that she fancied it might have been an optical delusion.

"Madame," resumed Armand, looking at her with contemptuous coldness, "a moment, a single moment, will suffice to strike you through every moment of your future life, — it is the only future that remains for us. I am not God. Listen to me attentively," he added, making a pause as if to give solemnity to his words. "Love will always come at your will: you have a power that is unlimited over men. Recollect that one day you called to you a man's love. It came, pure, honest, — as much so as it ever was or could be upon this earth; as respectful as it was violent; tender as the love of a woman, or that of a mother for her child; so vast, that it became a folly. You trifled with that love; you were guilty of crime. It is a woman's right to refuse the love she does not share. The man who cannot win her is never pitied; he has no cause for complaint. But, Madame la duchesse, to feign love, and draw to yourself a man deprived of natural affections; to teach him the knowledge of happiness in all its plentitude only to tear it from him; to rob his life of joy; to kill him not for time but for eternity; to poison every hour, every thought, — that I denounce as crime —"

"Monsieur!"

"I cannot permit you to answer me yet. Listen again: I have rights over you, though I shall exert only those of a judge over a criminal. If you had no conscience I should not blame you. But you are so young, surely you must have the life of youth in your heart; at least I like to think so. You are not too degraded to feel the meaning of my words, though you have debased yourself to commit a crime unpunishable by law."

At this moment the duchess heard the dull sound of bellows with which the unknown figures seemed to rouse the waning fire whose light now shot through the curtain; but Montriveau's lightning glance compelled her to be still and fix her eyes upon him; his words indeed were more to her than the crackling of that mysterious flame.

"Madame," he continued after a pause, "when the executioner puts his hand upon a hapless wretch, and lays his neck upon the plank where the law demands that an assassin shall lose his head, you know of it, every one knows of it, for the newspapers inform both rich and poor, — the rich that they may sleep in peace; the poor that they may take warning. Then you who are religious and even devout, you hasten to offer masses for the soul of that assassin; and yet — you are one of the same stock, the elder branch of it. Your branch fears nothing; you can live happy and careless. Driven by hunger or rage your brother, the galley-slave, has killed a man; you — you have slain a man's happiness, his life, his faith. The other waited for his victim openly, and slew him at his own risk in spite of the terrors of the guillotine; but you! — you

have heaped wrongs upon one who was innocent of wrong to you; you tamed a heart that you might devour it at your ease; you enticed it with caresses, omitting none that could lead it on to desire all; you required sacrifices that you might discard them; you made that man see the light, and then you struck him blind. A noble courage! Such infamies are luxuries unknown to the commoner women at whom you sneer. They at least know how to give and to forgive; they love and suffer. They make men paltry by the grandeur of their devotion. Go higher in society, and we find all the mud of the streets, but it is hardened and gilded. Yes, to find that which is absolutely ignoble we must look for education, a great name, a beautiful woman, a duchess. To fall so low, one must be born so high!" He paused a moment.

"I express myself ill: I suffer from the wounds you have given, but I do not complain of them. No, my words are not the expression of personal hope, neither do they contain personal bitterness. Rest assured, Madame, that I forgive you; and this forgiveness is so full that you cannot complain that I have brought you here, though against your will. Nevertheless, you may make other hearts suffer as mine has suffered. In their interest I am inspired with a desire for justice. Expiate your fault, and God may pardon you, — at least I hope so."

At these words the eyes of the woman now beaten down and torn in mind filled with tears.

"Why do you weep? Be faithful to your nature. You have watched without pity the tortures of a heart you have broken. Others may tell you that you give

them life; to me you have given annihilation. Perhaps you have guessed that I do not belong to myself; perhaps you will tell me to live for friends, and bear the chill of death, the grief of life, with them. Is that your thought? it is kind indeed! Are you like the tigers of the wilderness who make the wound and then lick it?"

The duchess burst into tears.

"Spare yourself those tears, Madame. If I believed in them at all it would be as a warning. Are they or are they not one of your stratagems? After all those that I have seen you employ, how could I believe in your emotions? Nothing about you has the power to move me now. I have said all."

Madame de Langeais rose with a movement that was full of dignity and yet was humble.

"You have the right to treat me harshly," she said, holding out to him a hand which he did not take. "Your words are not harsh enough. I deserve this punishment."

"Punishment! Madame, I punish you? To punish is to love. Expect nothing from me that resembles feeling. I might indeed on my own behalf be accuser, judge, and executioner; but, no, — I shall accomplish presently a duty, not a revenge. The worst vengeance to my thinking is to disdain that which is in our hands. Who knows? perhaps I shall be the minister of your future happiness. In bearing, as you will, the mark of your criminality, you may be forced to the repentant life of a criminal. Then, perhaps, you may learn to love!"

The duchess listened with a submission that was neither feigned nor calculated. She spoke, after an interval of silence; —

"Armand," she said, "I thought that in resisting love I obeyed the chaste instincts of a woman; and it was not from you that I expected such reproach. You take my weakness and call it crime. Did you not see that I was sometimes drawn beyond my duty by the thoughts, unknown to me, of love; and that on the morrow I was grieved, distressed, at having gone so far? Alas! I sinned through ignorance. There was, I swear to you, as much good faith in the minutes when I yielded to my feelings as there was in the hours of my remorse. And then, what is it you complain of? The gift of my heart did not suffice, you demanded brutally — "

"Brutally!" exclaimed Montriveau; then he said within himself, "If I enter a war of words with her I am lost."

"Yes, you came to me as to some bad woman; without respect, with none of the courtesies of love. Had I not the right to pause, to reflect? Well, I have reflected. What was unseemly in your conduct is excusable. Love was its motive; let me think so, and justify you to my own heart. Armand, to-night as you uttered that prophecy of evil I was thinking of our happiness. I had confidence in the noble character of which you have given me so many proofs. I was all yours —" she added, bending to his ear. "Yes, I had a strange new desire to give happiness to a man so sorely tried by adversity. Master for master! I asked for a noble man. The higher I felt myself, the less I could look down. Trusting in you, I thought of a lifetime of love at the moment you predicted death. Strength is never without mercy: my friend, you are

too strong to be cruel to a poor woman who loves you. If my faults have been many, will you not forgive them? Let me repair them: repentance is the grace of love, and, oh! I would be gracious to thee! Could I alone of all women be without fears, doubts, timidities, before the step that was to bind my life, — that tie that men break so easily? Those common women to whom you compare me, they yield, but they struggle. I too have struggled, but — I am here. Oh, God!" she cried, interrupting herself, "he will not hear me!" she wrung her hands. "But I love thee! I am thine!" she fell at his feet: "thine! thine! my only master!"

"Madame," said Armand, offering to raise her, "Antoinette cannot save the Duchesse de Langeais. I trust neither the one nor the other. You give yourself to-day, you will refuse yourself to-morrow. No power in earth or heaven can assure me of the gentle fidelity of your love. Pledges were for the past, — our past is gone forever."

At this moment the red light blazed up so vividly that the duchess involuntarily turned her head towards the portière and saw distinctly three masked men.

"Armand," she said, "I would not think ill of you. Why are those men here? What are you preparing to do to me?"

"Those men are as silent as I shall be myself on all that passes here: they are my hands and my heart. One of them is a surgeon —"

"A surgeon!" she said. "Armand — my friend! uncertainty is great suffering. Speak, tell me if you seek my life. I will give it to you; you need not take it."

"You have not understood me," said Montriveau.

"Did I not speak to you of justice? To quiet your fears," he added coldly, taking a piece of steel which lay upon the table, "I will explain what I have decided to do to you."

He showed her a small cross of two bars, fastened to the end of the steel. "My friends are heating a cross like this; we shall apply it to your forehead, — there, between the eyes, where you cannot hide it with diamonds, and escape the inquiries of your world. You will bear upon your brow a mark as infamous as that which brands the shoulder of your brother, the convict. The pain will be nothing; but I feared some agitation, some resistance—"

"Resistance!" she cried, striking her hands joyfully together. "No! no! I would that all the world were here to see it. Ah, my Armand, quick! mark, mark thy creature as a poor little thing of thine! Proofs of my love? they are all here in one. Ah, I see only mercy and pardon, happiness unspeakable, in thy revenge. When thou hast marked me for thine own, when my soul humbly bears thy red cipher, thou canst not abandon me. Then, then, I am forever thine! Isolate me from the world, for thou wilt take care of me: if not, thou wouldst be a coward, — and I know thee noble, great. Ah, the woman who loves will mark herself! Come, gentlemen, come quickly! brand the Duchesse de Langeais. She belongs to Monsieur de Montriveau now and ever. Come! all of you! my forehead burns hotter than your iron."

Armand turned quickly that he might not see the duchess kneeling before him. He said a word, and his friends disappeared from the adjoining room. Women

accustomed to the life of *salons* understand the play of mirrors: the duchess, eager to read his heart, watched him in the one that was before her. Unconscious of this, Montriveau wiped away a tear. The whole future of the duchess seemed in that tear; and when he turned to raise her she was standing. She believed he loved her; and the shock was terrible when he said, with that incisive firmness she had herself so often used when she was trifling with him, —

"I absolve you, Madame. Believe me, this scene will be as if it had never taken place. But here and now we say farewell. I like to believe that you were sincere in your boudoir in your seductions, and sincere now in this outpouring of your heart. Farewell! my faith is dead. You would torment me still; the duchess would be always there. Ah, no matter; farewell, we can never understand each other.

"What would you like to do?" he added, changing his tone to that of a master of ceremonies. "Will you go home; or would you like to return to Madame de Sérizy? I have employed all my power to protect your reputation; neither your people nor society can ever know what has happened during the last hour. Your people think you still at the ball; your carriage is in Madame de Sérizy's courtyard, your coupé is in your own. Where would you like to go?"

"What do you think best, Armand?"

"There is no Armand here, Madame la duchesse. We are strangers to each other."

"Take me to the ball, then," she said, wishing to put his power to the proof. "Throw back into the purgatory of the world a woman who has suffered and must

continue to suffer there, since for her there can be no joy. Oh, my friend, I do love you, — even as those commoner women love. I would put my arms about your neck in the ball-room, if you asked it. The world is vile, but it has not corrupted me. I am young, and love has made me younger. Yes, I am a child, — thy child, for thou hast created me. Oh, Armand! do not banish me from my Eden!"

Montriveau made a gesture.

"If I must go, let me take something with me, some trifle, — this, to put upon my heart to-night," she said, picking up one of his gloves and folding it in her handkerchief. "No," she continued, "I am not of that depraved world of heartless women. You do not know them, or you would distinguish me from them. Some give themselves for money, some for jewels; all are vile. And yet, my Armand, there are those among us who are noble, chaste, and pure. Would that I had all their noble qualities to place them at your feet! Do you seek a love beneath you, rather than one whose devotion is allied to greatness? Then, oh, my Armand! I would be a simple *bourgeoise,* a working-woman, to please thee. Misfortune has made me a duchess, — and yet I would I were born near the throne that I might lay down all for thee!"

He listened, moistening a cigar.

"Let me know when you are ready to go," he said.

"But if I wish to stay?"

"That is another thing."

"Look, this one is ill made," she cried, taking a cigar, and putting it to her lips.

"What! you smoke?" he said.

"I would do all things to please you."

"Very well: then go, Madame!"

"I obey," she answered, weeping.

"Cover your eyes that you may not see the way by which I take you.

"I am ready, Armand," she said, blindfolding herself.

"Can you see?"

"No."

He softly knelt at her feet.

"Ah, I hear thee!" she exclaimed, with a lovely gesture of joy, for she thought his feigned harshness was about to cease.

He offered to kiss her lips; she bent towards him.

"You can see, Madame?"

"A little."

"You deceive me again! always!"

"Ah!" she said, with the anger of an honor misunderstood, "take off this handkerchief and lead me, Monsieur; I shall not open my eyes."

Armand, convinced by this cry, led forward the duchess, nobly blind; and as he held her hand with paternal care to show her where to place her feet, and how to go up or down, he studied the quivering pulses which betrayed a heart now throbbing with a first true love. Madame de Langeais, happy in being able thus to speak to him, tried to tell him all; but he remained inflexible. When her hand questioned his, he gave no answering pressure. At last he told her to step forward alone; she obeyed. As she did so he held back her dress that it might not catch in a narrow aperture through which she passed. Madame de Langeais was deeply touched by this little action; it betrayed a lingering love. It was in fact Montriveau's last farewell; he left her without another word.

## XIII.

When she felt herself alone in a warm atmosphere the duchess opened her eyes. She saw that she was in Madame de Sérizy's boudoir, and her first care was to arrange the disorder of her dress and restore the poetry of her *coiffure*.

"My dear Antoinette," exclaimed the countess, opening the door of the boudoir, "we have looked for you everywhere."

"I came here for a little fresh air," she said; "it is so intolerably warm in the *salons*."

"We thought you had left, but my brother Ronquerolles told me your people were still waiting for you."

"I am very tired, dear; let me rest here for awhile."

"What is the matter? you are trembling."

The Marquis de Ronquerolles entered. "I fear, Madame la duchesse, that some accident may happen to you. I have just seen your coachman, and he is as drunk as the Twenty-two Cantons."

The duchess did not answer: she was looking at the chimney, the mirrors, the walls, — striving to detect the opening through which she had passed. Then the overpowering sense of being thrust back into the gayeties of a ball-room after the terrible scene which had changed forever the current of her life overcame her, and she began to tremble violently.

"My nerves are shaken by that prediction of Monsieur de Montriveau," she said, "though it was only a jest. I must go home and see if the London axe will pursue me in my dreams. Adieu, dear; adieu, Monsieur le marquis."

She crossed the ball-rooms, detained frequently by flatterers whom she looked at with strange pity. She felt how small her world had been when she, its queen, was thus humbled and abased. Oh! what were all these men beside the one she loved, — compared to him whose character, freed from the pettiness she had forced upon it, now stood forth in her mind, perhaps with fond exaggeration, in the noblest proportions?

She found her servants waiting and asleep.

"Have you left the antechamber this evening?" she asked.

"No, Madame."

As she got into her carriage she saw that her coachman was drunk, — a danger which would have frightened her under other circumstances, but the great shocks of life arrest all vulgar fears. She reached home safely; but knew herself changed and in the grasp of an unknown emotion. For her there was from henceforth but one man in the world; that is to say, for one only did she desire to have a value. If physiologists can promptly define love by the light of the laws of nature, moralists find far more difficulty in explaining it when considered with the developments given to it by society. Nevertheless there exists, in spite of the heresies of the thousand and one sects that divide the church of love, a straight and clear-cut line passing sharply through their doctrines; a line which discussion

cannot bend, and whose inflexible truth explains the crisis into which the Duchesse de Langeais, like many other women, was now plunged. She did not love as yet: she had a passion.

Love and passion are two states of the soul which poets, men of the world, philosophers, and fools continually confound. Love carries with it a mutuality of feeling, a certainty of joys that nothing can take away, a constant interchange of happiness, and a confidence between two beings so complete as to exclude all jealousy. Possession is then a means, not an end. Infidelity may cause suffering, but cannot detach love. The soul is not more, nor is it less, ardent or agitated; it is ceaselessly happy. Spread through all time, as if by a divine breath, desire takes but one tint; the sky of life is blue as the blue of the purest heavens.

Passion is the foreteller of love and its infinitudes, to which all suffering souls aspire. Passion is hope, which may be deceived. Passion signifies both suffering and change; passion ceases when hope is dead. Men and women can, without dishonoring themselves, feel more than one passion: is it not natural for the heart to stretch out towards joy? In life there is but one love. All discussions written or spoken upon this feeling may be summed up in two questions: Is it a passion? Is it love?

As love cannot exist without the mutual joys that perpetuate it, the duchess was now under the yoke of passion: she was passing through the consuming agitation, the parching desires, the involuntary calculations, that are expressed by the one word *passion.* She

suffered. Amid these troubles of her soul rose the lesser tumults of vanity, self-love, pride, and dignity,—forms of egotism which are allied to each other. She had said to a man: "I love thee—I am thine!" Could the Duchesse de Langeais say these words in vain? Either he must love her, or she must lay down her social sceptre. She wrung her hands and writhed upon her bed, crying out: "I must be loved!" and the faith she still kept in herself revived her courage. The duchess was stung, the proud Parisian was humiliated; but the true woman clung to hope, and her imagination, resenting the lost time of joy, went before to picture the inextinguishable happiness of love. She well-nigh attained to a perception of it; for as a doubt of Montriveau's affection stung her, she found a sudden joy in saying to herself, "I love him!" The world and the Church—she was ready to lay them at his feet: Armand was her religion.

Madame de Langeais passed the following day in a species of moral coma, joined to bodily agitations that nothing can express. She tore up many letters as soon as she had written them; and allowed her mind to float on impossible conjectures. She tried to believe that Montriveau would come to her at the hour of his former visits, and waited for it eagerly: her whole being was concentrated on the single sense of hearing. She closed her eyes at times that she might force herself to listen, as it were, through space: then came the wish to annihilate all substances between herself and her love, that she might obtain that absolute silence which allows sound to reach us from long distances. In this concentration of her mind the ticking of the clock in

the boudoir was agony to her; it was like a sinister foreboding chatter, and she stopped it. Midnight sounded from the *salon*.

"My God!" she cried, "to see him would be joy. Once he came drawn by love; his voice filled this room, — and now, vacancy! nothing!"

Remembering those scenes of coquetry that once she played to his injury, tears of despair flowed down her cheeks.

"Madame la duchesse is perhaps not aware that it is two in the morning," said her waiting-woman. "I feared that Madame was ill."

"Yes, I am going to bed: but remember, Susette, never to enter my room unless I ring. I shall not tell you twice."

For a week Madame de Langeais went to all the houses where she hoped to meet Monsieur de Montriveau. Contrary to her custom she went early and came away late. She gave up dancing, and played cards. Fruitless expectation! She neither saw him, nor dared to utter his name. At last, overcome by a momentary despair, she said one morning to Madame de Sérizy with as much indifference as she could assume: "Have you quarrelled with Monsieur de Montriveau? I have not seen him at your house lately?"

"No, he does not come any more," answered the countess laughing; "he does not go anywhere. He is probably occupied with some woman."

"I thought," said the duchess gently, "that the Marquis de Ronquerolles was intimate with him?"

"I never heard my brother say that he even knew him."

Madame de Langeais made no reply. Madame de Sérizy took advantage of her silence to lash a friendship which had long been bitter to her, and she resumed, —

"Do you regret that gloomy individual? I have heard shocking things about him. Wound him, and they say he never forgives; love him, and he will put you in chains. When I complain of him, I am told by those who laud him to the skies that he knows how to love. I am constantly told of his great heart, of his devotion to his friends. Bah! society does not want such noble souls. Men of that kind are all very well among each other, but I wish they would stay there and leave us to our own little mediocrity. Don't you think so, Antoinette?"

In spite of her social self-possession, the duchess seemed agitated, but she replied with an ease of manner that deceived her friend, —

"I am really sorry not to see him any more, for I felt a great interest in him, — even a sincere friendship. You may think me absurd, dear friend, but I do prefer the nobler natures. To care for fools seems to me a proof that we have senses and not souls."

As Madame de Sérizy had never "distinguished" any but commonplace men, and was at this time much occupied by a handsome fop, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, she made no reply.

Madame de Langeais caught at the hope conveyed by this retreat from the world, and wrote to Montriveau a tender, humble letter fitted to bring him back to her if he still loved her. She sent it early in the morning by her footman, whom she questioned on his return. When the man assured her that he had given it into the hands of the marquis himself, she could scarcely restrain

her joy. Armand was in Paris! alone, at home, shut up from the world! During all that day she waited for the answer. None came. Through a series of hourly renewed expectations Antoinette found constant reasons for the delay. Armand was hesitating; perhaps the answer might be sent by post. But towards night she could deceive herself no longer. Day of anguish, mingled with sufferings that brought pleasure, throbbings of the heart which suffocated, struggles of the mind that shortened life! The next day she sent to Monsieur de Montriveau for the answer.

"Monsieur le marquis sends word that he will come to see Madame la duchesse," answered Julian.

She fled to the sofa in her boudoir that she might hide her joy.

"He is coming!" The thought rent her soul.

Those who have never known the storm and strain of such waiting, and the fructifications of hope that pass through it, are devoid of the clear flame which makes manifest to the soul the pure essence of a desired object as much as its actual reality. To love and wait, — is it not to drain the cruse of hope that never fails? — to yield one's self up to the flail of passion, happy through all the disillusions of the truth? Love's waiting, the emanation of vital force and desire, is to the human soul like the fragrant exhalations of certain flowers. We leave the gorgeous and sterile beauty of the tulip and the coreopsis to breathe the perfumed thought of the orange-flower and the volkemeria, — two blossoms which their native lands have likened involuntarily to youthful brides, lovely in their past, lovelier in their future.

The duchess learned the joys of her new birth as she felt with a species of intoxication these scourgings of love, and saw through her changed emotions new vistas and nobler meanings in the things of life. As she hastened to her dressing-room she understood for the first time the true value of dress and all the delicate minute cares of the person when dictated by love and not by vanity: already these things were helping her to bear the burden of suspense. Her *toilette* finished, she fell back into painful agitation, into all the nervous horrors of that dread power which sends its fermenting leaven through the mind, and is perhaps a disease whose anguish is dear to us.

She was dressed and waiting by two in the afternoon: at half-past eleven at night Montriveau had not arrived. To picture the agony of this poor woman, who may be called the spoiled child of civilization, we should need to tell how many poems the heart can concentrate into one thought, to weigh the essence exhaled by the spirit at the vibrations of a bell, or measure the vital forces spent and lost as carriage-wheels roll on and on without stopping.

"Can he be trifling with me?" she asked herself as she heard the clock strike midnight.

She turned pale; her teeth chattered as she struck her hands together and sprang up, quivering, in that boudoir where so often, she remembered, he had come unasked. Then she resigned herself. Had she not forced him to turn pale and quiver under the lash of her irony? Madame de Langeais now learned the miseries of a woman's destiny when, deprived of those means of action which relieve men, she can only love and wait.

To seek her lover is a fault few men will pardon; the majority see degradation in that celestial flattery. But Armand's soul was of a nobler sort; might he not be among the lesser number of those who reward such excess of love by an eternal devotion?

"Yes! I will go," she cried, tossing sleepless on her bed: "I will go to him; I will stretch my hands to him and never weary. A man like Armand will see in every step I take to him a promise of constancy and love. Yes! the angels descend from heaven to men. I will be to him an angel."

On the morrow she wrote one of those letters in which the spirit of the ten thousand Sévignés of Paris excel. And yet to ask for pity without humiliation, to fly to him swift-winged and never droop to self-abasement, to complain but not offend, to rebel with tenderness, to forgive without lowering a just dignity, to tell all and yet to avow nothing, — surely it needed the Duchesse de Langeais trained by the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry to write that enchanting letter.

Julian was despatched with it: Julian, like others of his calling, was the victim of the marching and countermarching of love.

"What answer did Monsieur de Montriveau send?" she asked, as carelessly as she could, when he came to give an account of his mission.

"Monsieur le marquis desired me to say to Madame la duchesse that it was well."

Horrible reaction of the hoping heart, — to receive before inquisitive witnesses the answer that crushed it! forced to silence, forbidden to murmur! This is one of the thousand pangs in the lot of the wealthy.

For twenty-two days Madame de Langeais wrote to Monsieur de Montriveau without obtaining any reply. At last her strength gave way, and she made the excuse of illness to escape her duties to the princess and also to society. She received only her father the Duc de Navarreins, her great-aunt the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, her maternal great-uncle the Vidame de Pamiers, and the uncle of her husband the Duc de Grandlieu. These persons readily believed in Madame de Langeais' illness when they found her day by day paler, thinner, more depressed. The vague unrest of a real love, the irritations of wounded pride, the sting of the only scorn that had ever reached her, the springing hopes forever formed, forever cheated, — all these passions uselessly excited wore upon her many-sided nature. She was expiating the past of her wasted life.

From this seclusion she emerged for a day to attend a review in which the general was to take part. Stationed with the royal family in the balcony of the Tuileries, the duchess enjoyed one of those hidden festivals of the heart whose memory lingers long through coming years. Her languor added to her beauty, and all eyes welcomed her with admiration. She exchanged a few glances with Montriveau, whose presence was the secret of her exceeding loveliness. The general marched past at her feet in all that pomp of military accoutrement which avowedly affects the feminine imagination, even that of the strictest prudery.

To a woman deeply in love, who had not seen her lover for two months, such a moment, fleeting as it was, must have seemed like the phase of a dream which reveals to our sight the fugitive vision of a land without

horizon. Women and very young men can alone imagine the absorbed yet passionate avidity which filled the eyes of the duchess. If men in their early youth and in the paroxysms of their first passion have passed through these phenomena of nervous force, they forget them so completely in later years that they deny the very existence of such luxurious ecstasy, — the only term by which we can represent these glorious intuitions. Religious ecstasy is the exaggeration of thought released from corporeal bonds; whereas, in the ecstasy of love, the forces of our dual nature mingle, unite, embrace each other. When a woman falls a prey to the tyranny of passion, such as that which now subjugated Madame de Langeais, she resolves rapidly, and by succeeding steps of which it is impossible to render an exact account. Thoughts are born one of another, and rush through the soul as clouds chased by the wind flee across the gray depths which veil the sun. Acts alone reveal the current of such thoughts. Here, then, are the acts which were the outcome of this woman's mind.

On the morrow the Duchesse de Langeais sent her carriage and liveries to wait at the door of Monsieur de Montriveau from eight in the morning till three in the afternoon. The marquis lived in the Rue de Seine, not far from the Chamber of Peers, where there was to be on that day a special sitting. Long before the Peers assembled, however, a few persons had noticed the carriage and the liveries of the duchess, — among them a young officer who had been repelled by Madame de Langeais and welcomed by Madame de Sérizy: the Baron de Maulincour. He went at once to his new

mistress, delighted to tell her, under promise of secrecy, of this amazing folly. Instantly the report spread telegraphically through the coteries of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, reached the Château and the Élysée-Bourbon, and became the news of the day, — the topic of all conversations from midday till midnight. Nearly all the women denied the fact in a manner which confirmed the truth of it; all the men believed it with much indulgent sympathy for Madame de Langeais. "That savage, Montriveau, has a heart of iron," they said, flinging the blame on Armand; "he has exacted this exposure."

"Well," said others, "Madame de Langeais has committed a generous imprudence. To renounce before the eyes of all Paris her rank, her fortune, her fame for her lover is a feminine *coup d'état*, as fine as that cut of a barber's knife which electrified Canning at the assizes. Not one of the women who blame her would have made this sacrifice, — worthy, indeed, of the olden time. Madame de Langeais is an heroic woman to act out the truth that is in her. She can love no one but Montriveau after this. Well, there is grandeur in saying openly: 'I will have but one passion!'"

"What will become of society, Monsieur, if you thus do honor to open vice without respecting virtue?" said the wife of the attorney-general, the Comtesse de Grandville.

## XIV.

While the Château, the Faubourg, and the Chaussée d'Antin were discussing the shipwreck of this aristocratic virtue, while lively young men were dashing on horseback through the Rue de Seine to see with their own eyes the carriage that proclaimed Madame de Langeais' presence with Montriveau, she herself was lying trembling in her darkened boudoir; Armand, who had chanced not to sleep at home, was walking in the Tuileries with his friend de Marsay; and the relations of the duchess were going from one to another making appointments to meet at her house, intending to reprimand her and take measures to stop the scandal.

At three o'clock the Duc de Navarreins, the Vidame de Pamiers, the old Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, and the Duc de Grandlieu were assembled in the *salon* of the Hôtel de Langeais. To them, as to all other inquirers, the servants answered that their mistress was out; the duchess had made no exception in favor of any one. These four personages — illustrious in that high sphere of which the Almanach de Gotha keeps the sacred record and annually sets a seal upon its changes and hereditary pretensions — demand a rapid sketch, without which this social picture would be incomplete.

The Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry was the most poetic female relic of the reign of Louis XV., to whose

surname she had, it was whispered, during her gay youth contributed her quota. Of her various early charms none remained but a nose remarkably prominent, thin, and curved like a Turkish blade, — the chief feature of a face which bore some resemblance to an old white glove, — a few crimped and powdered curls, slippers with prodigious heels, lace caps with ribbon knots, black mittens, and *des parfaits contentements.* To do her justice we must add, that she had herself so high an opinion of her ruins that she went bare-necked in the evening, wore gloves instead of sleeves, and painted her cheeks with the classic rouge of Martin. An alarming amiability in her wrinkles, a lively fire in her eyes, a portentous dignity in her carriage, a triple fork of malice on her tongue, an infallible memory in her head, made this old woman an actual power in society. The parchment of her brain held as much information as the archives of the Charter itself, and kept the record of all princely and ducal European alliances down to the very last drops of the blood of Charlemagne. No usurpation of titles could escape her. Young men anxious to be well thought of, ambitious men with a purpose, and all young women paid her perpetual homage. Her *salon* gave the law to the Faubourg Saint-Germain and the dicta of this female Talleyrand were accepted as final. Some persons came to her for information and advice on etiquette and the usages of society; others to take lessons from her faultless good taste. Certainly no old woman knew how to pocket her snuff-box with such dignity; and when she sat down, or merely crossed her legs, she gave to the sweep of her petticoats a grace and precision for which all elegant

young women sighed in vain. Her voice had stayed in her head throughout the greater part of her life, but she had not been able to keep it from getting into the membranes of her nose, which gave it a singular and significant ring. Out of her former property she had recovered 150,000 francs worth of woodland, generously returned by Napoleon; so that everything about her was important, from her worldly means and position, to her marked individuality.

This curious fossil was seated on a sofa at the corner of the fireplace, talking to the Vidame de Pamiers, another contemporaneous ruin.[1] This old noble, formerly a Commander of the Knights of Malta, was tall, slim, and lean; his neck was buckled in so tightly that the cheeks fell a little over the cravat and compelled him to carry his head extremely high, — a posture which would seem consequential in many, but in him was the natural expression of a thoroughly Voltairean mind. His prominent eyes seemed to see, and in fact did see, everything. He always put cotton in his ears. In short, his person in its entirety was a perfect model of aristocratic lines, — fragile, supple lines, slender and agreeable, able, like those of a serpent, to bend or erect themselves at pleasure, and glide or stiffen as he chose.

The Duc de Navarreins was walking up and down the room with the Duc de Grandlieu. Both were men of fifty-five years of age, — still fresh, fat, short, well-nourished, rather florid; with weary eyes, and their under-lips slightly pendulous. Except for the elegance

[1] *Vidame,* — feudal title of those who held the lands of a bishopric on condition of defending them.

of their language and the affable courtesy and perfect ease of their manners (which could in a moment change to insolence), a superficial observer might have taken them for a couple of bankers, — an error checked by the first words of their conversation, which was hedged with precautions against those whom they held in awe, dry or empty for their equals, and perfidious towards their inferiors, whom, as courtiers and statesmen, they knew how to win with verbal flattery, and stab, on occasion, with an unexpected word.

Such were these notable examples of a great nobility which chose to die unless it could remain its former unchanged self; which deserves praise and blame in equal portions; and which will never be adequately understood until some poet portrays it, happy in obeying its king and in perishing by the axe of Richelieu, but despising the guillotine of '89 as a low and contemptible revenge.

These four individuals were remarkable for thin shrill voices, curiously in harmony with their ideas and their deportment. Perfect confidence existed among them; yet their court habit of concealing all emotion kept them from openly expressing their displeasure at the folly of their young relation. To disarm my critics, and prevent them from fastening on the puerilities with which the following conversation opens, I must remind them that Locke, when in company with certain English lords renowned for their wit and distinguished for their manners as well as for their political integrity, amused himself by taking down their conversation at short-hand, and caused them to roar with laughter as he read aloud the result and asked them to say what they

could make of it. The truth is, the upper classes in all nations have a certain jargon and glitter of talk, which, if burned in the embers of literary or philosophical thought, leave a very small residuum of gold in the crucible. On all planes of social life, if we except a few Parisian *salons*, an observer will find the same absurdities, differing from one another according to the thickness or transparency of the varnish. Thus solid conversation is exceptional in society; Bœotian dulness carries the day and the burden of talk through all the various strata of the upper world. If in that social world men are obliged to converse, they are certainly permitted to think but little. Thought is fatiguing, and wealthy people want their lives to flow on without effort. If we put wit into a scale, sliding from the *gamin* of Paris to the peer of France, we shall understand Monsieur de Talleyrand's saying that "manners are everything," — a polite translation of the legal maxim that *La forme emporte le fond.*

To the mind of a poet the language of the lower classes will always have the advantage of giving a rough stamp of poetry to their thoughts. These observations explain in part the barren emptiness of ordinary social life, its want of real depth, and the repugnance which superior men and women feel to such unprofitable interchange of their thoughts.

The Duc de Navarreins suddenly stopped short as if struck by a bright idea, and said to his companion, —

"Have you sold Thornton?"

"No; he is lame. I am afraid I shall lose him. He is a capital hunter. Do you know how the Duchesse de Marigny is?"

"No; I did not call this morning. I was just going there when you came to tell me about Antoinette. She was very ill yesterday, and they despaired of her life. She received the last sacraments."

"Her death will alter your cousin's prospects?"

"Not at all. She divided her property in her lifetime, and kept only a pension, which was paid to her by her niece, Madame de Soulanges, to whom she made over the estate at Guébriant for an annuity."

"She will be quite a loss to society. A good woman. The family will lose her advice and experience, which had real weight. Between ourselves be it said, she was the head of the house. Her son, Marigny, is amiable enough; he is witty and can talk; he is agreeable, very agreeable — oh! as for agreeable, that's not to be denied; but he has no idea whatever of conducting himself. Still — it is very extraordinary — he is clever. The other day he was dining at the club with all those rich fellows of the Chaussée d'Antin, and your uncle (who is always there, you know, for his game of whist) saw him. Surprised to meet him there, he asked him if he belonged to the club. 'Yes; I don't go into the world any longer. I live with the bankers.' You know why, of course?" added the duke with a sly smile.

"No."

"Because he is infatuated with a pretty bride, — that little Madame Kellner, daughter of Gondreville, — a woman, they say, who is all the fashion among that set of people."

"Antoinette must be enjoying herself, I think," remarked the old vidame to his companion at the corner of the fireplace.

"The affection I feel for that dear child has obliged me to spend my morning in a singular way," replied the princess, pocketing her snuff-box.

"My dear aunt," said the duke, stopping before her, "I am in despair. Only one of those Bonaparte men is capable of exacting such an impropriety. Between ourselves, why did not Antoinette make a better choice?"

"My dear nephew," answered the princess, "the Montriveaus are an ancient family and well connected: they are related to all the high nobility of Burgundy. If the Rivaudoult d'Arschoot of the Dulmen branch should come to an end in Gallicia, the Montriveaus will succeed to all the titles of Arschoot; they inherit through their great-grandfather."

"Are you sure?"

"I knew it better than the father of this man, whom I used to know very well, and to whom I told it. Though a knight of several orders, he ridiculed distinctions. He was a student, — a perfect encyclopædia. But his brother made a great deal out of the emigration. I have heard that his relatives at the north behaved admirably to him."

"Yes; that is true. The Comte de Montriveau died at St. Petersburg, where I met him," said the vidame. "He was a large man, with an incredible passion for oysters."

"How many could he eat?" asked the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Ten dozen every day."

"Without indigestion?"

"None at all."

"But that is most extraordinary! Did not they give him gout, or stone, or some other inconvenience?"

"No; he had perfect health, and died from an accident."

"An accident! If nature prompted him to eat oysters he probably needed them; up to a certain point our predominant tastes are the conditions of our existence."

"I am of your opinion," said the princess, smiling.

"Madame, you are very satirical," said the duke.

"I only wished to show you that such sentiments would not be acceptable to younger women," she answered. Then she interrupted herself, and added, "But my niece! my niece!"

"Dear aunt," said Monsieur de Navarreins, "I cannot believe that she has really gone to Monsieur de Montriveau."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the princess. "What is your opinion, vidame?"

"If the duchess were an artless girl I should think—"

"A woman in love is always artless, my poor vidame: decidedly you are getting old," said the princess.

"What is to be done?" demanded the duke.

"If my dear niece is wise," answered Madame de Chauvry, "she will go to Court this evening. Happily this is Monday, a reception day. We will take care to have her well surrounded, and give the lie to this ridiculous rumor. There are a thousand ways of explaining it; and if the Marquis de Montriveau is an honorable man he will lend himself to any of them. We will make the pair listen to reason."

"It would be difficult to break a lance with Monsieur de Montriveau, dear aunt. He is a pupil of Bonaparte,

and he has a position. Bless me! he is a *seigneur* of these days, a commander of the Guard, an important man. He has not the slightest ambition; if he takes offence, he is just the man to say to the King, 'There is my resignation, — leave me in peace.'"

"What are his opinions?"

"Very bad indeed."

"As for that," remarked the princess, "the King himself is what he always was, — a jacobin *fleur-de-lised.*"

"Oh, somewhat modified!" interposed the vidame.

"No; I know him of old. The man who pointed to the Court and said to his wife the first time they dined in public, 'These are our people,' is neither more nor less than a black scoundrel. I recognize MONSIEUR in the King. The shameless brother who voted as he did in the Constituent Assembly probably conspires now with the liberals, and consults them. This philosophical bigot is quite as dangerous for his younger brother as he was for his elder; in fact, I don't see how the next reign will get out of the troubles this big man with a tiny brain has been pleased to create for it. Besides, he hates the Comte d'Artois, and would like to die with the thought that he could not reign long."

"My dear aunt, he is the King. I have the honor to serve him, and —"

"But, my dear nephew, your duties do not deprive you of the right of private judgment, do they? Your house is as ancient as that of the Bourbons. If the Guises had had a shade more resolution, his Majesty would be only a plain gentleman to-day. I am going out of the world at the right time — nobility is dead.

Yes, everything is at an end for you, my children," she added, looking at the vidame. "Is the conduct of my niece to be made the talk of the town? She has done wrong; I don't approve of her. A useless scandal is a great mistake. But, after all, I doubt the story. I brought her up, and I know that—"

At this moment the duchess emerged from her boudoir. She had recognized her aunt's voice, and had heard the name of Montriveau. She wore a long, loose morning-dress, and as she came into the room Monsieur de Grandlieu, who happened to be looking out of the window, saw the carriage enter the courtyard empty.

"My dear daughter," said the Duc de Navarreins, kissing her on the forehead, "are you aware of what is going on?"

"Is anything extraordinary going on, dear father?"

"All Paris thinks you are with Monsieur de Montriveau."

"Dear Antoinette, you have not been out, have you?" said the princess, holding out her hand, which the duchess kissed with respectful affection.

"No, dear aunt, I have not been out. But," she added, turning to the vidame and the Duc de Grandlieu, "I intended that all Paris should think me with Monsieur de Montriveau."

The duke raised his hands to heaven, struck them despairingly together and folded his arms.

The old princess rose quickly on her prodigious heels and looked at the duchess, who blushed and dropped her eyes. Madame de Chauvry drew her gently to her side and said, "Let me kiss you, my little angel."

Then she kissed her forehead tenderly, pressed her hand and added, smiling, "We are no longer under the Valois, dear child. You have compromised your husband and your position in the world. But we can undo it all."

"But, my dear aunt, I want nothing undone. I wish all Paris to think and say that I spent this morning with Monsieur de Montriveau. Destroy that belief, false as it is, and you will do me the greatest harm."

"My daughter," said the duke, "do you wish to be lost and cause your family great unhappiness?"

"My dear father, my family in sacrificing me to its own interests gave me over, without intending it, to irreparable misery. You may blame me for seeking to soften my fate, but you certainly must pity me."

"This is what it is to take the utmost pains to marry our daughters suitably," murmured the duke to the vidame.

"Dear child," said the princess, shaking off the grains of snuff that had fallen on her dress, "find solace where you can; it is not a question of hindering your happiness, but of keeping it within certain limits. We all know that marriage is a defective institution made tolerable only by love. But is it necessary in taking a lover to proclaim it on the Carrousel? Come, be reasonable and listen to what we say."

"I am listening."

"Madame la duchesse," said the Duc de Grandlieu, "if uncles were obliged to take care of their nieces, there would be but one business in life; and society would owe them rewards, honors, and the distinction due to the servants of a king. I have not come here

to talk to you about my nephew; I am thinking solely of your interests. Let us consider. If you are resolved to make an open break, let me tell you this: I know Langeais; I don't like him. He is miserly and selfish as the devil. He will separate from you, but he will keep your fortune and leave you penniless, and consequently without position in the world. The hundred thousand francs you lately inherited from your maternal great-aunt will go to pay for the jewels of his mistresses, and you will be tied, garroted by the laws, and compelled to say *amen* to all that he does. Suppose Monsieur de Montriveau should break with you? My dear niece, don't tell me that a man never abandons a young and pretty woman. The supposition is forced, I admit; but have we not seen many charming women, princesses among them, neglected and abandoned? Then where will you be, without a husband? Manage the one you have just as you take care of your beauty, — which is, after all, together with the husband, the tail of a woman's kite. I wish you to be happy and beloved; let us look therefore at the future. Happily or unhappily you may have children. What will you call them? Montriveau? Well, they cannot inherit their father's fortune. You will wish to give them yours; he will wish to give them his; but the law steps in and forbids it. How often we read of suits brought by heirs-at-law to dispossess the children of love! All over the country this happens daily. Suppose you bequeath your property in trust to some third person. Such a person may betray that trust; but justice cannot reach him, and your children will be ruined.

"Choose your path," he continued, "with your eyes open. See the difficulties which hedge you. Your children will be sacrificed to a mere fancy and deprived of their position in the world. So long as they are young it may be all very well, — they will be charming; but sooner or later they will reproach you for having thought more of yourself than of them. We old men know all this only too well; children grow to manhood, and men are thankless. Have I not heard that young de Horn, in Germany, say after supper, 'If my mother had been an honest woman, I should have been the reigning sovereign.' This IF has sounded in our ears all our lives from the lower classes, and the end of it has been the Revolution. When men can't complain of their fathers and their mothers, they complain of God, and of that state of life to which he has called them. Now, my dear child, we have come here to open your eyes to all this. I will sum it all up in two words, — a woman should never give her husband the chance to condemn her."

"Uncle, my life was all calculation. I calculated so much that I could not love. I saw, as you do, self-interest where now I see only feeling."

"But, my dearest child, life is a tangle of interests and feelings," exclaimed the vidame. "To be happy, we should try, more especially placed as you are, to combine feelings with interests. Let a *grisette* make love as she likes, — that's all very well; but you have a pretty fortune, a family, a title, a place at Court, and you must not throw them out of the window. What is it we ask of you? Merely to conciliate the proprieties, and not fly in the face of them. *Mon Dieu*, I

am nearly eighty years old, and I do not remember under the old régime a single lover who was worth the sacrifice you are ready to make for this fortunate young man."

The duchess silenced the vidame with a look; and if Montriveau had seen her then he would have pardoned everything.

"This would make a fine scene on the stage," exclaimed the Duc de Grandlieu; "and yet because it concerns your paraphernalia, your position, your independence, it has no effect. My dear niece, you are not grateful. You will not find many families where the relations are courageous enough to give the lessons of their experience, and talk plain common-sense to giddy young heads. Renounce your salvation if you wish to be damned, — I have nothing to say about that; but when it comes to renouncing your income, I don't know any confessor that can absolve you from the pains of poverty. I think I have the right to say these things, because if you rush to perdition I shall be the one to offer you a refuge. I am Langeais' uncle, and I alone can put him in the wrong by such a step."

"My daughter," said the Duc de Navarreins, rousing himself from a painful meditation, "as you speak of feelings, let me tell you that a woman who bears our name should have other feelings than those that belong to women of a lesser grade. Do you wish to yield to the liberals, to those Jesuits of Robespierre who seek to dishonor us? There are certain things that a Navarreins cannot do; it is not you alone who are dishonored, it is your house."

"Come," said the princess, "do not let us talk of dishonor. My dear sons, don't make quite so much of an empty carriage, and leave me alone with Antoinette. Come and dine with me, all three of you. I take upon myself to settle this affair in a proper manner. You men don't understand things; you put a great deal too much sharpness into what you have to say. I shall not let you quarrel with my dear niece; be so good as to go away."

The three gentlemen, guessing that the princess would do better without them, made their bow and departed; the Duc de Navarreins saying to his daughter as he kissed her brow: "Come, my dear child, be wise; it is not too late."

"I wish we could find in the family some vigorous young fellow who would pick a quarrel with this Montriveau and make an end of him," said the vidame, as they went downstairs.

## XV.

"My treasure," said the princess, making a sign to her pupil to take a low chair which was beside her, "I know nothing here below so calumniated as God and the eighteenth century. As I look back to the days of my youth, I cannot recall a single duchess who trod propriety under foot as you are doing. Scribblers and romance-makers have vilified the reign of Louis XV.; don't believe them. The Dubarry, my dear, was worth a dozen of that widow Scarron; she was a much better person.

"In my day a woman knew how to save appearances and keep her dignity. Indiscretion has been our bane; it is the root of the evil. Philosophers and all the other nobodies whom we admitted into our *salons* had the ingratitude and the impropriety in return for our bounty to make a schedule of our hearts, and decry us collectively and individually, and rail at the century. The masses, whose chance to judge of anything, I don't care what, is very small indeed, saw results only, and knew nothing of the ways that led to them. But in those days, dear heart, men and women were quite as remarkable as in any other epoch of a monarchy. None of your Werthers, none of your notables as they call themselves, not one of your men in yellow gloves, whose trousers nowadays conceal their skinny legs,

would have crossed Europe disguised as a peddler, to shut himself up, at the risk of his life from the poniards of the Duke of Modena, in the dressing-room of the regent's daughter. Which of your consumptive little dandies with their tortoise-shell eyeglasses would have hid for six weeks in a closet, like Lauzun, that he might give courage to his mistress in the pains of child-birth? There was more passion in the little finger of Monsieur de Jaucourt than in your whole race of wranglers who leave a woman's side to vote for an amendment. Find me to-day a single Court page who would let himself be hacked to pieces and buried under a stairway, merely to kiss the gloved fingers of a Konigsmark! One would really think the sexes had changed places, and that women were expected to devote themselves to men. The men of to-day are worth a great deal less, and think themselves worth a great deal more, than they were in my day. My dear, those adventures which they have raked up to assassinate our dear, good Louis XV. were all done in secrecy. If it had not been for a set of petty poets, scandal-mongers, and scavengers, who gossipped with our waiting-women and wrote down their calumnies, our epoch would have held its own in literature as to manners and morals. I am defending the century, and not its accidents. There may have been a hundred women of quality who lost themselves; but fools said there were a thousand, just as they estimate the enemy's dead on a battle-field. And after all, I don't know why the Revolution or the Empire need fling reproaches at us. I am sure they were licentious enough; without wit, coarse, vulgar — faugh!

all that was revolting! They make the vile spots on our history.

"This preamble, my dear child," she continued after a pause, "is simply to tell you that if you care for Montriveau, you are free to love him as much as you please, and as long as you can do so. I know, by experience, that short of locking you up (and we can't lock people up in these days) you will do as you please; that is what I should have done at your age, — except, my darling, that I should never have abdicated my rights as Duchesse de Langeais. Come, behave with propriety. The vidame is quite right; no man is worth a single one of the sacrifices which women are fools enough to make in return for their love. Keep yourself always in your position, my child; and then if things go wrong and you have reason to regret your course, well then, you are still the wife of Monsieur de Langeais. When you grow old, you will be glad enough to hear Mass at Court instead of in some country convent. There! that's the whole of it in a nutshell. Imprudence means an annuity, a wandering life, being at the beck and call of a lover; it means mortification at the hands of women who are not worthy of you, simply because they are more vilely clever. You had far better go to Montriveau after dark, in a hackney-coach, disguised, than send your empty carriage in broad daylight. You are a little goose, my child. Your carriage flattered his vanity, but your presence would have won his heart. I have told you the exact truth, but I am not the least angry with you. You are two centuries behind the times with your superb sacrifice. Come! let me arrange the matter. I shall say that

Montriveau made your people drunk to gratify his vanity, and compromise you — "

"For Heaven's sake, dear aunt," cried the duchess, springing to her feet, "don't calumniate him!"

"Ah, dear child!" said the princess, whose eyes lighted up, "I should love your illusions if they were not so dangerous for you; but all illusions fade. You would melt my heart if it were not too old. Come, darling, make no one wretched, — neither yourself, nor him, nor those who love you. I take upon myself to satisfy all parties. Promise me that you will do nothing without consulting me. Tell me everything, and I think I can guide you safely."

"Dear aunt, I promise — "

"To tell me all?"

"Yes, all, — that is, all that can be told."

"But, my treasure, it is precisely what can not be told that I wish to know; we must understand each other thoroughly. Come, let me press my withered old lips upon your sweet brow. No, no! I forbid you to kiss my dry bones; old people have a politeness of their own. Take me down to my carriage," she added, after kissing her niece.

"Dear aunt; then you think I might go to him disguised?"

"Well, yes, — it can always be denied," said the old woman as she went downstairs.

The duchess caught this idea alone from the sermon which the princess had preached to her. When Madame de Chauvry was safely in her carriage, Madame de Langeais bade her tenderly adieu, and returned radiant to her own room.

"My presence would have won his heart!" she repeated. "Yes, my aunt is right. A man cannot reject a woman if she seeks him rightly."

That evening at the reception of Madame la Duchesse de Berri, the Duc de Navarreins, Monsieur de Marsay, Monsieur de Grandlieu and the Duc de Maufrigneuse, triumphantly denied the offensive rumors which were current about the Duchesse de Langeais. So many officers and others asserted that they had seen Montriveau walking in the Tuileries during the morning, that the foolish story was laid to the door of chance, which takes all that is given to it. The next day the reputation of the duchess became, in spite of her efforts to blacken it, as spotless and bright as Mambrino's helmet after Sancho had polished it.

At two o'clock that afternoon Monsieur de Ronquerolles rode up to Montriveau in a secluded alley of the Bois de Boulogne, and said, smiling, "How goes the duchess? — Strike on, strike ever!" he added, suiting the action to the word and applying his whip significantly to his beautiful mare, which dashed away with him like a bullet.

Two days after this futile exposure, Madame de Langeais wrote a letter to the marquis, which remained unanswered like all its predecessors. This time, however, she had taken her measures and bribed Auguste, Montriveau's valet. At eight o'clock that evening she went to the Rue de Seine, and was ushered by Auguste into a room altogether different from the one in which the former secret scene had been enacted. There the duchess learned that the general would not be at home

that evening. "Has he two homes?" she asked. The valet would make no reply. Madame de Langeais had bought the key of the room, but not the sterling integrity of the man himself. When she was left alone she saw her fourteen letters lying on a small round table, still sealed, unopened: not one had been read! At this sight she fell into an arm-chair and for a moment lost consciousness. When she came to herself, she found Auguste holding vinegar to her face.

"A carriage, quick!" she said.

When it came, she ran down to it with convulsive rapidity, returned home and went to bed; telling the servants to deny her to every one. She remained thirty-six hours in her bed, letting no one approach her but her waiting-maid, who brought her from time to time a cup of orange-flower infusion. Susette heard her mistress utter a few low moans, and saw traces of tears in the sweet eyes which shone out with feverish light from the dark circles around them. On the succeeding day, after long and despairing meditation on the course she must now pursue, Madame de Langeais had a conference with her man of business, and apparently gave him instructions to make certain preparations. Then she sent for the Vidame de Pamiers, and while waiting for his arrival she wrote again to Monsieur de Montriveau.

The vidame was punctual. He found his young cousin pale, dejected, but resigned. It was about two in the afternoon. Never had this divine creature seemed so poetic as she now did in the weariness of her anguish.

"My dear cousin," she said to the vidame, "your eighty years have obtained for you this rendezvous. Oh,

do not smile at a poor woman who is in the deepest grief! You are a man of honor, and the events of your youth, I hope and believe, have inspired you with indulgence for women."

"Not the smallest!" he said.

"No?"

"They are happy in it all," he answered.

"Ah! — Well, you are in the heart of my family; you may be, perhaps, the last relative, the last friend, whose hand I shall ever press. I may therefore ask of you a last kindness. Do me, dear vidame, a service which I cannot ask from my father, nor from my uncle Grandlieu, nor from any woman. You will understand me. I entreat you to obey me, and to forget in future days that you have obeyed me, — no matter what may be the issue of your action. It is to carry this letter to Monsieur de Montriveau, to see him, to give him the letter, to ask him as one man can ask of another, — for you have among you a straightforwardness of feeling which you abandon in your treatment of women, — ask him to read this letter; but not in your presence, for men wish to hide emotions from each other. I authorize you, if you cannot otherwise get his consent, to tell him it is a matter of life or of death to me. If he deigns — "

"Deigns!" exclaimed the vidame.

"If he deigns to read it," continued the duchess with dignity, "say to him one last word. You will see him at five o'clock; he dines at home, alone, at that hour: I know this. Tell him he must for sole answer come and see me. If three hours later, — if at eight o'clock he has not left home, all will be over; the Duchesse de Langeais will have left this world. I shall not

be dead, dear, — no; but no human power will ever find me on this earth. Come and dine with me. Let me have a friend beside me in my last agony. Yes; to-night, dear cousin, my life will be decided, one way or the other. Whichever way it is, the future must consume me. Silence! I can listen to nothing; neither to entreaties nor advice. Come, let us talk, let us laugh," she cried, holding out to him a hand which he kissed. "Let us be like two old philosophers who enjoy life up to the moment of their death. I will dress, I will make myself very coquettish for you, — you may be the last man that sees the Duchesse de Langeais."

The vidame made no reply; he bowed, took the letter and did his errand. He returned at half-past five o'clock and found his cousin dressed with care, exquisitely. The *salon* was decorated with flowers, as if for a fête; the dinner was delicious. The duchess called up her sparkling wit and all her sweet attractions for the old man's pleasure. At first he tried to treat all these seductions as a charming jest; but from time to time the false magic of her gayety grew dim; he saw her shiver with sudden terror, or listen, as if she heard into the depths of silence. If he then said to her, "What is it?" she answered, "Hush!"

At seven o'clock the duchess left the room, but soon returned, dressed as her waiting-woman might have dressed for a journey. She took the arm of her guest, asking him to accompany her. They entered a hired coach, and at a quarter to eight were before the door of Monsieur de Montriveau.

Armand all this while was reading and considering the following letter: —

My Friend, — I have passed a few moments in your room without your knowledge. I have brought back my letters. Oh, Armand! from you to me this cannot be indifference; and hatred would act otherwise. If you love me, cease this cruel comedy. You will kill me. Erelong, when you perceive, too late, how deeply I have loved you, you will fall into despair.

If I am mistaken, if you feel only aversion for me, then all hope is over: aversion means contempt, disgust; and from those feelings men make no return. Terrible as this may be, the thought of it will comfort my coming woe; you will have no regrets. Regrets! ah, my Armand! I fain would think I cause you none, — not one. No; I will not tell you of the havoc within me.

I must live, and cannot be your wife! After giving myself utterly to you in my thoughts, to whom must I now give myself? To God. Yes, the eyes which you have loved for a moment shall look upon no other man: may God's mercy close them! I shall hear no living voice of man but thine, so tender once, so cruel yesterday, — yesterday, for I am still in the morrow of your vengeance. May the word of God consume my soul, and take it from this earth! Between his anger and thine, oh, my friend! what is left for me but prayers and tears?

You will ask me why I write to you. Do not be angry if I cling to a last ray of hope; if I give a last sigh towards the happy life before I leave it forever. My position is terrible. I am calm, with the stillness that a great resolution lends to the soul, — the stillness left by the departing echoes of a storm. In that terrible adventure which first drew me towards you, my Armand, you went from the desert to an oasis, led by a faithful guide. I drag myself from the oasis to the desert, driven forth by your pitiless hand. Yet you alone, my friend, can comprehend the pang with which I look backward to my days of joy; to you alone can I tell my grief without a blush. If you forgive me, I shall be happy; if you

are inexorable, I will expiate my wrong-doing Is it not natural that a woman should wish to live in the memory of him she loves, clothed with all high and generous feelings? Oh, my only dear one! suffer your handmaid to bury herself away from sight in the dear hope that you will think her noble and true! Your harshness has compelled me to reflect; and since I have loved you so well, I have come to think myself less guilty than you deem me. Listen to my defence! I owe it you: and you, who are all the world to me, do you not owe me a moment's justice?

I now know, through my own anguish, how much my conduct must have made you suffer ; but I was then so ignorant of love! You who have known the secret torture, — you compel me to bear it! During the eight months we were together, you did not make me love you. Why was that? I cannot tell you any more than I can tell you why it is that I now love you. Yes, certainly I was flattered to be the object of such passionate affection, — to see the ardor of your eyes; and yet they left me cold and without desires. I was not a woman. I knew nothing, I imagined nothing, of the devotion or of the happiness of my sex Whom shall I blame for this? Would you not have despised me if I had feigned a love I did not feel? Is it noble in a woman to reward a passion she does not share? Perhaps there is no merit in giving one's self up to love when we ardently desire it? Alas, my friend! I may tell you now that these thoughts came to me when I was so coquettish with you; but you seemed to me so noble, so lofty, that I could not bear to let you win me out of pity. Ah! what am I writing?

I have taken back my letters. They are burned. You will never know the love, the passion, the madness they revealed.

I stop. I will be silent. Armand, I will say no more about my feelings. If my love, my prayers, cannot reach from my soul to your soul, neither can I, a woman, owe your

love to pity. I must be loved irresistibly, or cast off ruthlessly. If you refuse to read this letter, it will be burned. If, having read it, you are not three hours later my husband — my only husband, forever mine — I shall feel no shame in knowing that it is in your hands. The pride of my great despair will protect me from all sense of degradation, and my end shall be worthy of my love.

You yourself, meeting me no more in this world though I still be living, — you will not think without a quiver of the woman who three short hours hence will breathe only to fold you forever in her love, or else to live on hopeless, lifeless, yet faithful, — faithful, not to mutual memories, but to feelings misunderstood and cast away. The Duchesse de Lavallière wept for her lost happiness, her vanished power: the Duchesse de Langeais' sole happiness must be her tears, but evermore she will be a power in your soul. Yes; you will regret me. I feel that I was not meant for this world, and I am grateful to you for proving it to me.

Adieu! you cannot touch my axe: yours was that of the executioner; mine is that of God. Yours killed; mine shall save alive. Your love was mortal; it could not bear disdain or ridicule, — mine bears all things, and cannot weaken; it lives immortally. Ah! I feel a dreary joy in rising thus above you, — you who felt yourself so great; in humbling you with a calm, protecting smile like that of the angels sitting at the feet of God, who obtain the right and the power to watch over men. You have had passing hopes, desires; but the poor nun will light your path with ceaseless prayers, and hold you in the shelter of the love divine.

I foresee your answer, Armand; and I bid you come to me — in heaven. Friend, strength and weakness are both admitted there; both are sufferings. This thought quells the anguish of my last trial. I am so calm that I should fear I loved thee less were it not for thee that I quit the world.

ANTOINETTE.

"Dear vidame," said the duchess when they reached Montriveau's house, "do me the kindness to ask at the door if he is at home."

The vidame, obedient as a man of the eighteenth century, got out of the carriage, and presently returned with a "Yes" that made her shiver. She took him by the hand and let him kiss her on both cheeks. Then she begged him to go away without watching her or seeking to protect her.

"But the passers-by?" he said.

"No one could show me disrespect," she answered.

It was the last word of the woman of the world, of the duchess. The vidame went away. Madame de Langeais remained at the threshold of the door wrapped in her mantle, waiting till the hour of eight. The clock struck. The unhappy woman waited still ten minutes — a quarter of an hour. Then she saw a last humiliation in the delay, and hope forsook her. She could not repress one cry. "Oh, my God!" she said, and left the fatal threshold. It was the first word of the Carmelite.

## XVI.

Montriveau had a conference that evening with several of his friends. He urged them to bring it to a close; but his clock was slow, and he only left his house to go to the Hôtel de Langeais at the moment when the duchess, driven by chill anguish, was rushing on foot through the streets of Paris. She was weeping when she reached the Boulevard d'Enfer. There for the last time she saw Paris, smoking, noisy, filled with the lurid atmosphere produced by the street-lamps. Then she got into a hired carriage, and quitted the great city, never to enter it again.

When the marquis reached the Hôtel de Langeais and was told that the duchess was out, he thought himself led into a trap, and rushed impetuously to the vidame, who received him just as he was putting on his dressing-gown and thinking of the happiness of his pretty cousin. Montriveau gave him that terrible look whose electric shock could paralyze both men and women.

"Monsieur, have you lent yourself to a cruel jest?" he cried. "I have just come from the Hôtel de Langeais, and the servants say that the duchess is out."

"A great misfortune must have happened through some fault of yours," answered the vidame. "I left the duchess at your door —"

"At what hour?"

"A quarter to eight."

Montriveau rushed home precipitately, and asked his porter if de had seen a lady at the door. "Yes, Monsieur, a beautiful lady who seemed in trouble. She was crying like a Madeleine, but without making a noise, and standing straight up like a reed. At last she said out loud, 'Oh, my God!' and went away. It made our hearts ache, my wife and I, who were close by without her seeing us."

The stern man turned pale, and staggered as he heard these words. He wrote a line to Monsieur de Ronquerolles, and sent it instantly; then he went up to his own room.

Towards midnight Ronquerolles came. "What is the matter, my dear friend?" he said, on seeing the general.

Montriveau gave him Madame de Langeais' letter.

"Well?" asked Ronquerolles, when he had read it.

"She came to my door at eight o'clock; at a quarter past eight she had disappeared. I have lost her, and I love her. Ah! if my life belonged to me I would blow my brains out."

"Nonsense!" said his friend. "Be calm; a duchess does not run away like a milkmaid. She cannot do more than ten miles an hour; we, all of us, will do twenty. The deuce!" he added. "Madame de Langeais is not an ordinary woman. We will, one and all, be on horseback early in the morning. Before then we shall find out from the police what road she has taken. She must have a carriage; this kind of angel does not have wings. We can know at once whether she has left Paris or is hidden here. We shall find her, of course. Besides, have we not the telegraph to stop her, even if we did not follow her? You will

be happy. But, my dear brother, you have committed the error of which all men with your strength of will are more or less guilty. You all judge of others by yourselves; you never rightly see how far human strength can go without breaking under the strain. Why did you not consult me this evening? I should have said to you, 'Be punctual.' Early to-morrow morning, then!" he added, grasping Montriveau's hand, as he stood silent and motionless. "Sleep now, if you can."

But every resource that statesmen, sovereigns, ministers, bankers, — in fact, all human powers, — could socially bring to bear, was employed in vain. Neither Montriveau nor his friends could find the slightest trace of the Duchesse de Langeais. She was evidently cloistered. Montriveau resolved to search, or cause to be searched, every convent in the world; he would have the duchess though it cost the lives and destruction of a city.

To do justice to this man's character, we must state that his passionate ardor rose day after day with the same fire, and lasted unslackened for five years. It was not till 1829 that the Duc de Navarreins learned by chance that his daughter left Paris for Spain as waiting-maid to Lady Julia Hopwood; and that she quitted the latter at Cadiz without exciting suspicion that Mademoiselle Caroline was the illustrious duchess whose disappearance was then the chief topic of interest in the great world.

The feelings with which these lovers met at last, — parted by the iron grating of the Carmelites, — in the

presence of the Mother Superior, can now be understood in all their intensity; and their violence under such terrible reawakening will doubtless explain the final scenes of this history.

The Duc de Langeais having died in 1824, his wife was free. Antoinette de Navarreins was living, wasted with grief, on a rock in the Mediterranean. But there was hope, — the Pope might annul the vows of Sister Theresa. Happiness, bought by so much love and anguish, might yet blossom for these lovers. Such thoughts sent Montriveau on the wings of the wind from Cadiz to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Paris.

Some months after his return to France a merchant brig, equipped for fighting, left the Port of Marseilles for the coast of Spain. She carried a number of French gentlemen of high distinction, who were smitten with a passion for the East, and were on their way to visit those regions. The intimate knowledge which Montriveau possessed of the manners and customs of that fabled land made him a most desirable companion for such a journey, and they invited him to accompany them. To this he consented; and the Minister of War made him a Lieutenant-General, and placed him on a Committee of the Artillery, that he might be free to join this party of pleasure.

The brig dropped anchor, twenty-four hours out of port, to the north-westward of an island not far from the coast of Spain. The vessel had been chosen for her light draught and slender sparring, so that she could without danger run in close to the reefs which, on that side, add to the strong defence of the rocky coast. If the fishing vessels or the inhabitants of the little town

perceived the brig at her anchorage, they could scarcely feel anxiety, so inaccessible was the island on that side: moreover, precautions were taken to explain her presence. Before sighting the island, Montriveau had run up the flag of the United States. The seamen engaged for the voyage were Americans, and could speak nothing but English. One of Montriveau's companions took them all ashore to the chief inn of the little town, where he kept them at a degree of drunkenness which deprived them of the free use of their tongues. He himself dropped hints that the brig was chartered to search for lost treasure, — an employment followed in the United States by a body of men who made it a superstition, and whose exploits had been related by the writers of that country. All this explained the appearance of the brig so near the breakers. The passengers and ship's company were searching, said the pretended boatswain, for the wreck of a galleon, lost in 1788, with treasure brought from Mexico. The innkeepers and the authorities inquired no further.

Armand and the devoted friends who were helping him in his enterprise had seen at once that neither force nor fraud could help them to carry off the duchess by the town approach to the convent. They resolved, with the natural audacity that characterized them, to take the bull by the horns, and construct a path to the convent over the perpendicular rocks which to all other eyes were inaccessible: to vanquish nature as General Lamarque had vanquished it at the assault on the island of Capri. In the present instance the sheer precipice offered less foot-hold than the cliffs of Capri had afforded to Montriveau, who had taken a leading part in that

amazing expedition, and to whom the nuns were far more formidable antagonists than Sir Hudson Lowe. To carry off the duchess with noise or disturbance of any kind would have seemed disgraceful to these men. If forced to open action they might as well, to their minds, lay siege to the town and the convent, and leave no witness alive to tell the tale, after the manner of pirates. For them the enterprise had but two aspects: either some great conflagration and feat of arms with which all Europe might resound, and yet remain forever ignorant of its cause; or else a mysterious, silent, aërial abduction which the nuns should lay to the devil himself in the belief that he had paid them a visit. This last plan carried the day in the final council held before leaving Paris. All preparations being made for the sure success of their enterprise, these daring men, surfeited with the tame pleasures of society, looked forward to the event with eager enjoyment.

A species of canoe, made at Marseilles with the utmost care from a Malay model, enabled them to creep up among the reefs to a point where navigation became absolutely impossible. Two cables of iron wire, stretched parallel for a distance of some feet on an inward incline, and along which they slipped baskets, also made of iron wire, served them for a bridge over which, as in China, they could pass from rock to rock. The reefs were thus connected together by a series of cables and baskets, which looked like the webs that a certain species of spider weaves from branch to branch of a tree, — a work of natural instinct, which the Chinese, born imitators, were the first, historically speaking, to copy. Neither the surging of the sea nor the capricious

dash of the waves could affect these frail constructions. The cables had elasticity and play enough to sway to the violence of the water at a curvature long studied by an engineer, the late Cachin, the immortal maker of the port of Cherbourg, who discovered the scientific line which limits the power of the angry waves; a curve settled by a law won from the secrets of nature by the genius of observation, — which is, we may say, wellnigh the whole of the genius of mankind.

Montriveau and his companions were alone upon the rocks. No eye of man could reach them: the best glass, levelled from the deck of the nearest passing vessel could not have shown the fine threads of the iron cords stretched among the reefs, nor the men themselves hidden by the rocks. After eleven days' toil these thirteen human demons of will and energy reached the foot of the projecting rock, which rose perpendicularly forty feet above the level of the sea, — a cliff as difficult for men to climb as the smooth sides of a glass or porcelain jar to a mouse. This solid mass of granite was fortunately cracked. A fissure, whose edges were two straight lines, allowed them to drive in, at the distance of a foot apart, stout wooden wedges, upon which these bold workmen fastened iron props. These props, made for the purpose, were finished at one end with perforated iron plates, into which they could slip steps made of thin fir plank, which also fitted into notches made in a mast, the exact height of the rock-face, and of which the base was securely fastened to the granite ledge below. With an art worthy of these men of action, one of them, a profound mathematician, had calculated the angle at which each step should be graduated from the

top to the bottom of the mast, so as to bring at its exact middle the point from which the steps of the upper half should widen, like a fan, till they reached the top of the rock; while the steps of the lower half widened in like manner, only in a reverse direction, to the lower end of the mast. This staircase, of incredible lightness yet perfectly firm, cost twenty-two days' work. A phosphorus match and the ebb of a tide would be enough to obliterate all traces of it. Thus no revelation was possible, and no search for the violators of the convent could be successful.

At the summit of the great precipice was a rocky platform surrounded on three sides by the sheer cliff. The thirteen unnamed comrades, examining this resting-place with their telescopes by the light of the moon, were satisfied that from this point, in spite of some difficulties, they could easily reach the gardens of the convent where the trees were sufficiently thick to shelter them from sight among the branches. There they could doubtless come to an ultimate decision as to the best means of seizing the nun. After all their patient efforts they were unwilling to compromise the success of their enterprise by running any risk of discovery; and it was therefore determined that they should wait till after the last quarter of the moon before making the final attempt.

Montriveau remained during the last two nights alone on the granite platform, wrapped in his cloak, and lying on the rock. The evening and the morning chants wafted by the breeze filled him with inexpressible delight. He went to the foot of the convent wall, trying to hear the notes of the organ or distinguish from the volume of sound one precious voice. But in spite of the silence

around him the distance was too great for any but the confused sounds of the music to reach his ear, — mellow harmonies in which all defects of execution were lost, and from which the pure thought of art came forth and filled the hearer's soul, needing no efforts of attention nor the weariness and strain of listening. Terrible yet tender memories for Armand, whose love blossomed afresh as in its spring-time through the soft breezes of this music, from which his fancy caught aerial promises of coming happiness.

On the morning of the last night, he came down from the rock at dawn, having spent many hours with his eyes fixed on the unbarred window of a cell looking seaward: bars were not needed to the cells that hung above this vast abyss. A light had shone from this window throughout the night. An instinct of the heart, which misleads as often as it guides, cried to him, "She is there!"

"She is there! to-morrow she will be mine!" he cried, mingling his joyous thought with the solemn tones of the convent bell rung slowly. Strange capriciousness of heart! He loved with more of passion the nun, worn out with the griefs of love, wasted by tears and prayers and fasts and vigils, the woman of twenty-nine who had passed through many sorrows, than he had loved the gay young girl, the sylph, the woman of his first adoration. But men of vigorous soul are drawn by their own nature to love the sublime expressions that noble grief or the impetuous flow of thought imprint upon the face of a woman. The beauty of her sorrow is the most attaching of all loveliness to a man who feels within his heart an inexhaustible treasure of

consolation for one so tender in weakness, so strong through feeling. The beauty of color, of freshness, of smoothness, — the *pretty,* in short, is a commonplace charm which attracts the common run of men. Montriveau was made to adore a face where love could shine amid the lines of grief and the blight of melancholy. Such a lover brings to life at the voice of his all-powerful desires a new being, throbbing with fresh youth, breaking forth for him alone from the worn shell so beautiful to his eyes yet broken and defaced to the eyes of others. He possesses two women, — one who seems to the world pale, discolored, sad; and that other woman within his heart whom no eye sees, an angel comprehending the life of the soul, beaming in all her glory amid the solemnities of love.

Before quitting his post of vigil the general heard faint harmonies floating from the window of the lighted cell; soft voices filled with tender pathos. When he descended to his friends stationed at the base of the rock, he told them — in a few words ringing with that deep, restrained communication of feeling, whose imposing expression men respect and comprehend — that never in his life had he drunk in such infinite felicity.

That evening, in the shadow of thick darkness, eleven devoted comrades hoisted themselves up the precipice, each carrying his poniard, a supply of chocolate, and all the tools necessary to burglars. They scaled the walls of the cloister by means of ladders, manufactured and brought up for that purpose, and then found themselves in the cemetery of the convent. Montriveau recognized the long vaulted gallery he had formerly passed through on his way to the convent parlor; also

the windows of that room. His plan was at once formed and adopted. To enter the parlor by the window which opened into the part where the nuns had stood behind the grating; to follow the corridor which led out of it; to read the names inscribed on the lintels of the doors; to find the cell of Sister Theresa; to surprise and gag her while sleeping; to bind and carry her away, — all this part of the work was an easy matter for men who joined the habits and ways of the world to the audacity and expertness of galley-slaves, and who were calmly indifferent should necessity require the thrust of a weapon to secure silence.

The bars of the window were sawn through in two hours. Three men remained as sentries without; two more watched in the parlor; the rest, with bare feet, stationed themselves from point to point along the corridors; while Montriveau advanced, hidden behind a young man, the most dexterous of them all, Henri de Marsay, who as a matter of precaution was dressed in the habit of the Carmelites, precisely like that worn in this convent. The clock struck three as Montriveau and the false nun reached the dormitories. They soon made out the position of the cells. Hearing no noise, they advanced cautiously, reading by the light of a dark lantern the names fortunately engraved on the doors, together with the mystical devices and portraits of saints which each nun on entering the convent inscribed, like an epigraph, upon the new tale of her life, and in which she often revealed the last thought of her past.

When they reached the cell of Sister Theresa, Montriveau read this inscription: *Sub invocatione Sanctæ*

*Theresæ.* The motto was: *Adoremus in æternum.* Suddenly his companion laid a hand upon his shoulder and showed him a bright light shining upon the flagstones of the corridor through the chinks of the cell door. At this moment Monsieur de Ronquerolles joined them.

"The nuns are in the church chanting the Office of the Dead," he said.

"I remain here," replied Montriveau; "fall back, all of you, to the parlor, and close the door of this corridor."

He entered quickly, preceded by the pretended nun, who put aside his veil. They then saw in the antechamber to an inner cell the dead body of the duchess lying on the floor upon a plank of her bed, and lighted by two wax tapers. Montriveau and de Marsay said no word, uttered no cry; but they looked at each other. Then the general made a sign which meant, "We will carry her away."

"Escape!" cried Ronquerolles, suddenly entering. "The procession of nuns is returning; you will be seen."

With the magical rapidity which a passionate desire infuses into movement, the body of the duchess was carried to the parlor, passed through the window, and conveyed to the foot of the wall as the abbess followed by the nuns reached the cell to take the body of Sister Theresa to the chapel. The nun whose duty it was to watch with the dead had unscrupulously entered the inner cell to search for the secrets of its occupant. She was so intent upon this purpose that she heard nothing, and was thunderstruck when she came out into the

antechamber and found the body gone. Before the astonished women thought of making any search, the duchess had been lowered by ropes to the foot of the precipice, and the companions of Montriveau had destroyed their work. At nine o'clock in the morning no trace remained of the stairway or the wire bridges. The body of Sister Theresa was on board the brig, which came into port to embark her men and disappeared during the forenoon.

Montriveau remained in his cabin alone with Antoinette de Navarreins, whose countenance shone mercifully upon him, resplendent with the sublime beauty which the calm of death bestows at times upon our mortal remains.

"Come," said Ronquerolles to Montriveau when he reappeared on deck. "She was a woman; now she is nothing. Let us fasten a cannon-ball to her feet, and consign her to the sea, and think of her only as we think of a book read in our childhood."

"Yes," said Montriveau, "for it is but a poem."

"Ah! that is right," said Ronquerolles. "Have passions if you will; but as for love, we should know where to place it. It is only the last love of a woman that can satisfy the first love of a man."

**THE END.**

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